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TALES
OF
THE TEUTONIC LANDS.

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TALES

OF

THE TEUTONIC LANDS.

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BY

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AND

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'POPULAR ROMANCES OF THE MIDDLE AGES.'

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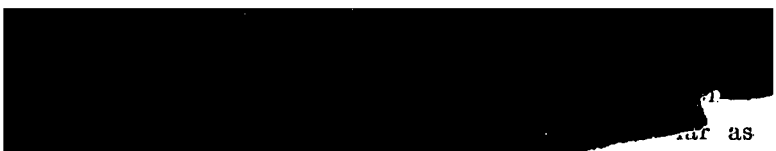

as whatever can be
c. second belong the legends in
wl certain amount of national or local history has been imbedded amongst masses of mythical detail. The third class comprehends those tales which on a careful analysis are found to lie in great part or wholly beyond the province of the comparative mythologist.

Of this last class it seemed necessary to include some specimens, as I felt it to be my duty to leave no room for the misapprehension that the science which professes to explain completely the myths of Psyche and Erôs, of Urvasî and Purûravas, seeks to resolve the whole popular literature of the Aryan nations into phrases which have certainly furnished all the materials for the legends of Hermes and Phoibos, of Sigurd, Helgi, and Baldur. The tales given as specimens of this class belong to Scandinavian rather than to Teutonic folk-lore; but their general character and their wide popularity may render it unnecessary to apologise for their insertion.

No one probably will be disposed to question the importance of determining the degree of credibility to

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researches of the historian.

That the general result of this examination is to prove the wholly mythical character of the vast mass of popular tradition, I can have no doubt; and I venture to think that few will be disposed to dispute it. That it throws a fresh light on the history of the human mind, and invests these stories with a deeper, nay with an imperishable interest, seems to be not less certain; and if comparative mythology, while it explains the growth of popular stories, have shown that their growth was inevitable, and that it implies no corruption of the human intellect and no debasement of human affections, it will have done a work the importance of which can scarcely be exaggerated. It will, in short, have shown that the multiplication of these myths was a necessary phase of the education of the world, and will have imparted to the epic narratives into which these myths have been developed a higher and more abiding charm.

I part reluctantly from a subject to which I have devoted the thought and labour of many years; but as I have worked throughout under the conviction that my sole object was the ascertainment of fact, the consciousness that in however small a measure my efforts may have furthered the interests of historical science will, if the feeling be justified, be my best reward.

My contributions to this volume are confined to the Introduction and the stories of Walter of Aquitaine and of Hugdietrich and Hildeburg. With these exceptions, all the tales have been contributed by Mr. E. H. Jones.

G. W. C.

May 30, 1872.

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Erratum.

Page 107, line two from bottom, *for* part nor plot *read* part nor lot.

TALES

OF THE

TEUTONIC LANDS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE STORY of ARTHUR, as it has come down to us in the pages of mediæval romance-writers, has by general admission undergone a series of modifications by which two or more tales originally distinct have been welded into one. It can scarcely be said that much care has been taken to disguise the process. The fortunes of Tristram and Isolte are linked with those of Lancelot and Guenevere; but of the complete independence of the two stories in their earlier form there could have been no doubt, even if the history of Tristram had not been given by itself in the romance which bears the name of Thomas of Ercildoune. With these three distinct cycles of Arthur, Lancelot, and Tristram are interwoven the cycles of Balin and Gareth;[1] and the examination of these legends has shown that even these cycles are repeated in the subordinate tales which are introduced in the course of the great epic. Thus the myth of Gareth is reproduced in that of the Knight of the Illshapen Coat: and the story of the Fair Maid of

Recurrence of myths in popular traditions.

[1] *Popular Romances of the Middle Ages*, Introduction, p. 31.

Astolat is but a reflexion of the story of Elaine the mother of the good knight Galahad.[1] The analysis of these tales has perhaps been extended to every feature of any importance in the whole Arthur romance—the result being, as it would seem, that for not one of these features can any genuine historical character be claimed. There remained, indeed, the possibility, or, as some may prefer to say, the likelihood, that King Arthur was a real person—that is, that a chief named Arthur lived at some time and in some place; but of his life and acts we have no definite knowledge,[2] and so far as we can be said to know anything about them, the exploits of the real Arthur were not those which popular tradition has delighted to invest with a magic colouring. But the analysis further showed not merely that the stories of Tristram and Lancelot, of Guenevere and Isolte, repeated each other, and were again exhibited in the career of subordinate personages in the drama, but that for the most part the incidents of these legends and the sequence of these incidents form the staple of the myths which have sprung up in every Aryan land with an exuberance of growth which half disguises their substantial identity. These incidents the science of Comparative Mythology professes to have traced back to their earliest form in phrases which spoke not of men and women, but of the Dawn which drives her white herds to their pastures,[3] of the Sun which slays the dew whom he loves, of the fiery dragon which steals the cattle of the lord of light or the Moon which wanders with her myriad children through

[1] *Popular Romances of the Middle Ages*, Introduction, p. 52.

[2] 'We know neither the period in which he lived, nor the district over which he reigned.'—Lingard, *History of England*, i. 72. See further, *Popular Romances*, p. 5.

[3] These guardians of the cattle of the sun, *i.e.* of the bright clouds, are the Saramâ and Ushas of the Rig Veda, and the Lampetiê and Phaethousa of the Odyssey.—*Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, i. 419–421.

the heaven.[1] For a large number of the stories springing from these phrases a strict etymological connexion has been established; but the link which binds the myth of the Hellenic Hephaistos with that of the Vedic Agni[2]; justifies the inference that both these myths reappear in those of Regin and of Wayland, or in other words, that the story of the Dame of the Fine Green Kirtle[3] is the story of Medeia, and that the tale of Helen is the legend of the loves of Conall Gulban.[4] It follows, therefore, that the whole Arthur story must take its place in that large family of heroic legends which have their origin in mythical phrases describing the phenomena of the outward world, and more especially those of the day and of the year.

Historical and mythical elements in popular tradition.

But if these legends cease thus to be for us storehouses of historical facts, it does not follow that the names in any given story are not those of persons who really lived. The childhood of Cyrus is made the subject of a story which is historically impossible: yet Cyrus was as real a person as the Duke of Wellington. The incidents which belong to the struggle at Ilion as related in the Homeric or other Hellenic poems certainly never occurred on the shores of the Hellespontos; but no attempt has ever been made to show that no conflict ever took place between Achaians and Ilians on the banks of Simoeis or Skamandros. All that has been said is that this war, if there was such a war, is not the war of which the epic and lyric poets of Greece have left us a narrative;[5] that, do what we will, we cannot extract the history of the one from the legends

[1] In the myth of Endymion, the Sun who has sunk to his dreamless sleep, the Moon appears as Asterodia journeying with her fifty daughters through the sky. In the Christian myth she becomes St. Ursula with her 11,000 virgins—this Ursula again appearing in the myth of Tanhaüser as the occupant of the Horselberg, and as the fairy queen in the tale of True Thomas of Ercildoune.—*Mythology Ar. Nat.* ii. 131-218.

[2] *Ib.* ii. 194. [3] *Ib.* i. 291. [4] *Ib.* ii. 157. [5] *Ib.* i. 193.

of the other, and that if any portion of this history be recovered (and the possibility of such recovery has never been denied), it will be re-gained not from the myths but from evidence quite independent of the myths. In the poems the cities of Tiryns and Mykenai had an importance which they had certainly lost long before the dawn of contemporary history; and the ruins still remaining of their walls and buildings fully bear out the truth of the description. It is at the least possible that future excavation or research may make us acquainted with the names of some of the chiefs who ruled in these ancient fortresses, and even with their acts; but until we have such evidence, we cannot be justified in assuming that kings named Agamemnon and Menelaos ever reigned at Mykenai or Sparta, still less in asserting that they led an expedition to Ilion and that this expedition was successful, for it is also possible that popular tradition may, whether purposely or unwittingly, have given a wrong colouring to certain events, and that Agamemnon, victorious elsewhere, may have failed at Ilion. From the legend of Scarborough Castle we should derive a false conclusion about Oliver Cromwell;[1] and it cannot be too strongly or too often repeated that we are unable to test and to correct the statements of Hellenic tradition by contemporary history, as we can test and correct the legend of Scarborough Castle. In short, for our knowledge of the Trojan war we are in a position which would also be our position with regard to the history of England, if all our knowledge of it rested on such a tradition as that which brings Cromwell to a place from which he is known to have been absent. The extent of the historical element in these traditions is not the question; the point is that the legends furnish no means which can enable us to answer the question satisfactorily—in other words, that we cannot dig out history from quarries in

[1] *Mythology of Ar. Nat.* i. 187.

which history and myth may be mingled together, and that the attempt to dig it out will be rewarded by the discovery of something which may look like bones but which we cannot even piece into the skeleton that once upheld a living form. The story of the fight at Roncesvalles may bring before us a name which was really borne by a prefect of the Britannic march in the days of Karl the Great.[1] But we learn the fact not from the legend but from the pages of Eginhard, and if the romances in which Karl is introduced reflect his greatness, they are in their incidents not more trustworthy than the Scarborough tradition. The stories which take Karl the Great to Jerusalem may be founded on his historical relations with Haroun-al-Raschid; but we certainly do not gain our knowledge of these relations from the stories. How much of light researches into strictly historical monuments may throw on the forms assumed by particular traditions, it is obviously not the task of the comparative mythologist to determine; but he is fully justified in asserting that the conquest of Lydia furnishes no warrant for assuming that the grandfather of Cyrus was named Astyages or Asdahag, when this name is but another form of Azidahaka or the biting snake, the Zohak, who in later romance feeds with human flesh the snakes which cluster on his shoulders.[2] The point for the historian to prove is that he is in possession of evidence by which he is able to test and correct the statements of the myths: and if he can show this, he will receive from the comparative mythologist attention not less respectful than that which will be paid to him by any others. But the former will still be compelled to assert that the new knowledge, if any there be, comes from the historical monuments and not from the legend,

[1] *Mythol. of Ar. Nat.* i. 190. *Popular Romances*, Introd. 66.
[2] *Mythology of Ar. Nat.* ii. 358.

the legend being for historical purposes useless in the absence of the means for testing it.

This repetition would be superfluous and even impertinent, were it not that mythologists are with a strange pertinacity charged with intruding into a province which does not belong to them, by attempting to explain away history into fable. No such attempt is made. If on evidence not obtained from the fable itself it can be shown that history is mixed up with it, and if the extent of this historical element be pointed out, the conclusion will be at once accepted; but in the interests of historical truth itself the mythologist must protest against the method which seeks to discover this element in myths which the historian has not the means of testing. This Mr. Grote felt when he saw that he could neither affirm nor deny the occurrence of a war at Troy, while he insisted in words as plain as any man could use, that a war without Helen and Sarpedon and Memnon and Hektor would not be the war of which we read in Hellenic poetry.[1] But it may perhaps further be said with justice, that while mythologists commonly express themselves in language which seems to convey its meaning clearly, it is not always easy to understand the meaning of some who profess to be their opponents. The former have distinctly asserted that the Volsunga Saga is mythical, or in other words that its chief, if not indeed all its incidents can be traced to phrases which spoke originally of the phenomena of the outward world, and of these only; that these incidents are found in the myths of all Aryan lands; and that, in short, the story of Volsung and of Sigurd is only another form of the story of Perseus, Theseus, Herakles, or Phoibos. So far as they can see, there is no reason for supposing that the names of any of the personages in the tale were suggested by those of real

Limits of historical inquiry.

[1] *History of Greece*, Part I. ch. xv. (vol. i. p. 435).

persons. The matter is of the very least importance, as those persons could not have done the deeds attributed to them; but the possibility that some of the names may have been so suggested has never been denied. Mythologists have further asserted that, as the Volsung tale is itself a development of the Helgi Sagas, so the Nibelung tale has grown up in the same way from the story of the Volsungs, the later growth being in its incidents not a whit more historical than the earliest.

These inferences or conclusions are, it is now asserted, altogether upset, and the results of comparative mythology generally impugned, by the fact that some half-dozen names in the Nibelungenlied sound like the names of persons who lived in the fifth or sixth centuries of the Christian era. 'The story of Sigurd, the hero of the Edda,' we are told, 'with all the accessory characters and all the adventures—a favourite example of the solar myth with the new school—is so closely imitated to all appearance in the Nibelungenlied, the great German epic composed centuries after it, that here, if anywhere, comparative mythology appears to have won a great victory. The names are the same, and the adventures are very like. It would then follow necessarily that the later poem at all events (if not both) was mythical and not historical. But strange to say, there is an historical basis for this later poem—an historical basis so certain that not even the mythologers can gainsay it. Closely as the names appear to correspond to those of the Edda, they correspond just as closely to historical personages who lived after the Edda was known and referred to in literature. Sigurd represents Siegbert, king of Austrasia 561-75 A.D. Gunther represents Gundicarius, king of Burgundy, in 435 A.D. So Brynhild, Irenfried, Dietrich, and Atli are the reflections of Brunehault, Hermannfried (Irminfrid?), Theodoric, and Attila. Here then, where comparative mythology might possibly

Coincidence of names in the Volsung and Nibelung tales.

have explained everything; here, where in default of other evidence we should all have been quite content to accept its explanation, it is shown to be a false and delusive guide.'[1]

What is the meaning of these propositions? The phrase that the Nibelung song has a sure historical basis would seem to justify the supposition that the song contained a certain amount of history—in other words that it recorded a number of facts which were done by the men or women to whom they are attributed, and that these persons are known to be and can be proved to be historical. But these sentences are not intended to convey this meaning. It is admitted that the names of the actors in the Nibelung tale are, speaking generally, the same as those of the men and women who play their part in the Volsung story, and that the adventures attributed to the former are very like those of the heroes of the latter. The historical basis (astonishing as it seems) is limited apparently to the names. These correspond closely to the names of some persons who lived about the fifth or sixth century, and as this resemblance cannot be denied, therefore the poem is historical. This really comes to nothing more and nothing less than the assertion that the Arthur romance would become an historical poem of the nineteenth century, if a version of it were published which for the name of Arthur the British King should substitute that of Arthur Duke of Wellington. It would not be pretended that the actions of the duke were those of the Celtic chief; but if with his name a few other names should be given of persons now living which correspond to those of the Arthur romance, the story would have an historical basis so certain that not even the mythologers could gainsay it.

Inferences drawn from this coincidence.

The question turns less on the names of the actors than

[1] Mahaffy, *Prolegomena to Ancient History*, p. 89.

on their career. If the series of deeds attributed to Sigurd and Etzel, Jörmunrek and Gunnar were done by Siegbert and Attila, Hermanric and Gundicar, the tradition would certainly become historical: but it is not pretended that this is the case. The resemblance of the Nibelung names Siegbert, Brunhilt, Attila, Gunther, Swanhild, to the Volsung names Sigurd, Brynhild, Atli, Gunnar, Swanhild, cannot be denied: but it has long since been remarked that Jornandes, who wrote long before the murder of the Austrasian Siegbert, already knew the daughter of the mythic Sigurd, Swanhild, who was born according to the Edda after the murder of her father, and who was afterwards killed by Jörmunrek, 'whom the poem has again historicised in Hermanicus, a Gothic king of the fourth century.'[1] If we had no other warrant for the inference, this resemblance of names would justify the surmise that popular tradition is tempted to assimilate the names of ancient heroes to those of persons living at the time when the tradition takes shape. But this temptation is not confined to names. The epic poems of a nation may be regarded as giving a tolerably faithful picture of the society of the age in which they are composed: but the age of the Nibelungenlied was in manners and form of thought separated from the age of the Volsung story by no gulf which would render the task of adapting the poem to a later time a matter of any special difficulty. It so happened that the names of some kings and queens and warriors of the fifth or sixth centuries lent themselves easily to the purpose of the more modern poet; but this facility was purely accidental, and thus the resemblances of name impart no historical character to the poem, if by this term we mean a claim to credi-

The real point at issue.

[1] Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, ii. 112. It may be added that the character of Etzel in the Nibelungenlied is utterly unlike that of the historical Attila.

bility for the incidents related in the narrative.[1] That the colouring thrown over the poem should be made, so far as it was possible, to suit the political and social conditions of the age of Attila, Theodoric, Siegbert or Brunehault, is in no way surprising; it would be strange indeed were it otherwise. But so far as the incidents are concerned, it is scarcely more than a colouring, and writers, who would willingly trace the historical elements of the tale, have found themselves compelled to admit that the real events noticed in the poems are very few in number.

The historical Attila had a brother whose name is given as Bleda: the Etzel of the Nibelung lay is the son of Bludi or Budli, not his brother; and Bunsen has acknowledged the difficulty of making an expedition of Attila himself to the Rhine fit in with what we know of the history of those years.[2] All that can be said (and this is willingly granted) is that the poet or poets of the Nibelung lay have adapted the names of the older legend to names of living or recently living persons, whenever it was possible to do so; that they have

[1] Nothing that I have said, so far as I am aware, would be found inconsistent with the following words of Professor Max Müller:—'There are evidently historical facts round which the myth of Herakles has crystallized, only we cannot substantiate them so clearly as in the myths of the Nibelungen, because we have there no contemporaneous historical documents. Yet as the chief Herakles is there represented as belonging to the royal family of Argos, there may have been a Herakles, perhaps the son of a king called Amphitryo, whose descendants, after a temporary exile, reconquered that part of Greece which had formerly been under the sway of Herakles. The traditions of his miraculous birth, of many of his heroic adventures, and of his death, were as little based on historical facts as the legends of Sifrit. In Herakles killing the Chimæra and similar monsters we see the reflected image of the Delphian Apollo killing the worm, or of Zeus, the god of the brilliant sky, with whom Herakles shares in common the names of Idæos, Olympios, and Pangenetor. As the myth of Sigurd and Gunnar throws its last broken rays on the kings of Burgundy and on Attila and Theodoric, the myth of the Solar Herakles was realised in some semi-historical prince of Argos and Mykenæ.'—*Chips*, ii. 113.

[2] *God in History*, ii. 478.—*Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, i. 289 note.

introduced some fresh names which were likewise borne by historical persons, and that they have further imparted to the story some appearance of agreement with great events of their own or of a recent age. Nor can the fidelity of the poet to the manners of his time be ascribed necessarily to the narrative of the acts of the several personages in the drama. The subordinate or unimportant details are probably described with exactness and care. There would be no temptation to depart from existing customs with regard to dress, weapons, food, the precedence of ranks in the state, religious worship, or the usages of war. But the care of the poets to represent these things aright imparts no credibility to narratives of events which are in themselves impossible;[1] and when we find that these impossible events form the groundwork of a thousand other stories, whether Greek, or Teutonic, or Scandinavian, we are at once justified in asserting that in the common element thus found we discover the real character of these tales; that of the Helgi and Volsung stories this common element is, in Bunsen's words, 'purely mythological, namely the combat of the Sun-god who is slain by his brother and avenged by a younger brother,'[2] and that this element must also pervade the Nibelung lay, in which, substantially, neither the names nor the incidents are changed. Thus the final conclusion is, that the Nibelung romance has no historical character. A certain amount of historical material may have been introduced into a story with which, until it was so introduced, it had nothing to do.[3]

[1] *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, i. 289.

[2] *God in History*, ii. 474.

[3] Thus Sigurd cannot 'represent' the Austrasian king Siegbert, nor Gunther the Burgundian Gundicar, unless the poets who first introduced these names into the tradition intended that they should represent those chieftains or kings,—in other words, unless the poets of the Edda knew that centuries after their day these kings would rule over Austrasia or Burgundy, and would do moreover precisely those acts which they described as the deeds of the Sigurds and Gunnars of long past ages.

The temptation to regard as generally historical a poem or tale which exhibits vivid pictures of social life, as a set-off to a narrative of utterly impossible incidents, is, it would seem, widely felt; but when we trace these incidents to a common source, we prove at once that this seemingly historical character, even where it can be shown to exist, is simply a veil thrown by the poet over creations not his own, which he can only venture to some extent to modify. Among these creations the greater number perhaps consist of personages who not merely perform deeds far exceeding all human powers but stand forth as lying under a terrible doom for the commission of enormous and even impracticable crimes. That the stories of such crimes are the result of deliberate invention, is a supposition which all probably would be glad to avoid if they could: that the marriage of Oidipous and Iokastê is explained by Vedic phrases which speak of the Sun as the son, the husband, or the brother of the Dawn, is a conclusion which none perhaps would be reluctant to accept, if no overwhelming difficulty lay in the way. That there is much to be urged in favour of this conclusion, and nothing, it would seem, against it, the analysis of that myth has probably proved.[1] The traditions out of which the Volsung and Nibelung stories have grown exhibit features more terrible and revolting than those of the Theban legends. It is scarcely too much to say that precisely to these features the Helgi Sagas owe their chief value.

The Helgi Sagas.

Like the Arthur romance, these sagas are marked by the constant recurrence of the same incidents with modifications of local colouring, ascribed to persons bearing different names. As it is clear that there must be some foundation for these stories, and as the hypothesis which assigns to them an historical

The fatal children.

[1] *Mythology, Ar. Nat.* ii. 69, 344. Bréal, Le mythe d'Edipe.

character has been found to be untenable, we have nothing to do but to note the points of likeness or repetition and to urge that this fact, like every other fact, calls for explanation. The common element in the stories of Oidipous, Romulus, Perseus, Telephos, Theseus, Iason, and other mythical beings, is the destiny which makes them, whether wittingly or unwittingly, destroy the beings from whom they have sprung or bring ruin upon their homes and kinsfolk. Some of these become the instruments of a righteous vengeance on those who have sought to deprive them of life; the birth of others, as of Dionysos or Asklêpios, marks the moment of death to their mothers. If it be granted that Greek, Icelandic, or Teutonic myths must be treated by the same method, and if it may now be fairly affirmed that such myths as those of Asklêpios, Herakles, and Perseus have been removed far beyond the sphere of human life, we at once begin to see the framework on which these Saga stories have been built up. Unless we have some better evidence than that of mere assertion for the statement that Kephalos and Prokris, Erechtheus and Kekrops, were real human inhabitants of Athens, we must see in the legend the simple story of the dew dried up or slain by the heat of the day.[1] In the northern stories the hero frequently dies before his son, who is to take his place or to revenge him, is born; or, as the Greek story would have it, Apollôn has forsaken Korônis before her child sees the light. This is simply the legend of the birth of Volsung,[2] whose father Rerir goes home to Odin, leaving his wife sick at heart, like Lêtô while she wandered from land to land before the

[1] *Mythology Ar. Nat.* ii. 30–91.

[2] The story goes that the childless Rerir besought the aid of the god who sent Freya in the guise of a crow, with an apple which she dropped into his lap. Rerir took it and gave it to his wife, who then became the mother of Volsung. This apple reappears in the myth of Persephonê, and in that of Nana the daughter of the river-god Sangarios.—*Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, ii. 298.

birth of Phoibos. It is told again of Macduff, 'and they say that the youngling kissed his mother or ever she died.' So uniform is the career of children thus born that Grimm could say generally, 'Aus dem Mutterleib geschnittene Kinder pflegen Helden zu werden;'[1] and the embrace which they barely give to the dying mother is the embrace which Orpheus, Alpheios, and Phoibos seek in like manner to give to Eurydikê, Arethousa, and Daphnê, as each vanishes away. In a form still more striking, this mythical death of the parents of fatal children is exhibited in the story of Agni, the Vedic fire-god, whose parents are the two sticks from which his flame is kindled, and which he devours as soon as he is born. If the tree which rises through the roof of Volsung's hall has a singular likeness to the world-supporting Yggdrasil, the story of Odin who thrusts into this tree-trunk the sword which can be drawn out only by him who is destined to wield it, merely reproduces the myth of Aigeus and Theseus. The weapon will yield to no hand but that of Volsung's son Sigmund, and at his touch it leaves the trunk as though it were a feather floating on the water. Here we have the counterpart of the great stone which Theseus, when he had reached his full strength, lifts without effort, to find the sword and sandals which his father had buried beneath it. In the Arthur story it is again a stone, and the pith of the tradition is given in the motto carved upon it, 'Whoso pulleth this sword out of this stone is rightwise born king of England.' This sword, in the Volsung story, is Gram, a weapon from the same armoury with the brands of Arthur and of Roland, and the spears and arrows of Phoibos, Odysseus, Achilleus, Philoktêtês. For this sword there is a deadly contest between Sigmund and his people and the men of king Siggeir who has married

[1] *Deutsche Mythologie*, p. 362.

Sigmund's sister Signy. The result is that Sigmund and his ten brothers are bound, the deaths of these ten brothers being brought about in a way which will be familiar to all who are acquainted with modern Hindoo folk-lore. As in the story of the wolf and the seven little goats the wolf swallows six of the kids, but is ripped up before it has swallowed the seventh [1] (a myth parallel to that of Kronos who swallows his children), so here Sigmund alone escapes the she-wolf [2] who each night devours one of the ten, and who is the mother of king Siggeir, the enemy of Volsung and his children. Sigmund now, being loosed from his bonds, dwells in the woods, like many of the heroes in popular German and Norse stories; and Signy, his sister, sends to him one of her children, the son of Siggeir, to whom Sigmund gives his meal-bag, charging him to make bread. The boy fails to do so, being afraid to set hand to the meal-sack, because somewhat quick lay in the meal; and at the bidding of Signy, Sigmund slays him. The same fate befalls her next child, and then we come to an incident which shows still more clearly the nature of the materials with which we are dealing. Signy changes forms with a witchwoman whom she leaves with Siggeir, and going into the wood becomes by her brother Sigmund the mother of Sinfjötli,[3] who safely goes through the ordeal before which her children by Siggeir had failed. The child, when he is asked if he has found aught in the meal, answers, 'I misdoubted me that there was something quick in the meal when I first

[1] *Mythology Ar. Nat.* i. 358.

[2] This is, in short, the superstition of Lykanthropy. See. *Mythology Ar. Nat.* i. 63–363.

Siggeir, it is scarcely necessary to say, is, throughout, the darkness, and the irreconcilable enemy of Volsung, though he has married his sister. Hence also his wife is his persistent enemy—the dawn being the bride as well as the child of darkness, with which, however, she is in instinctive antagonism.

[3] *Mythology Ar. Nat.* i. 275–279.

fell to kneading of it; but I have kneaded it all up together, both the meal and that which was therein, whatever it was.' Sigmund replies with a laugh 'Naught wilt thou eat of this bread this night, for the most deadly of worms hast thou kneaded up therewith.' This worm is almost ubiquitous in Teutonic and Scandinavian myths; and unless all the results of comparative mythology are to be overthrown or set aside, it is the Python of Delphoi, the Ahi and Vritra of the Hindu, the Grendel of Beowulf, the Chimaira and Dragon of Bellerophontes, Perseus, and Iason. Its death is the slaying of the darkness, whether of the night or of the winter; and the weakly children which fail to slay it answer to the ill-fated knights who fail[1] in their efforts to pierce the thorn hedge behind which sleeps Briar-rose, or to leap the barrier of spears which guards the sun-maiden of Hindu fairy tales. When at length the malignant power to whom Signy is wedded, like the wife of Bluebeard, has been overcome, she exults in the thought of her son Sinfjötli, and says:—

'I let slay both my children, whom I deemed worthless, for the revenging of our father, and I went into the wood to thee in a witch-wife's shape; and now behold Sinfjötli is the son of thee and of me both; and therefore has he this so great hardihood and fierceness, in that he is the son of Volsung's son and Volsung's daughter, and for this and for naught else have I so wrought that king Siggeir might get his bane at last . . . And merrily now will I die with king Siggeir, though I was naught merry to wed with him.'

Having thus said, she kisses her brother and her son, and going back into the fire dies with Siggeir and his men. Even in this strange part of the legend we may fairly acknowledge both 'the nature and beauty with

[1] *Popular Romances*, Introd. p. 34.

which it is filled' on the one condition that we are not called on to interpret this nature of humanity. There may be possibly parallels to such doings among the savages of Fiji or Dahomey, or in the deeds of some exceptional French and English murderers; but that such things should come into the heads of decent folk without awakening in them, and in those to whom they might speak of them, a feeling of indignant horror, is a simple impossibility. When a like idea was presented to the Greek mind in the marriage of Oidipous and his mother Iokastê, this horror was roused directly by the thought of its bearing on the conditions of human society. Hence the sequel of bitter woes and the terrible drama which is brought to an end in the sacred grove of the Eumenides. Throughout, on the part of the involuntary actors, there is nothing but grief of mind and agony of conscience. Here there is nothing but exultation, as well for the incest as for the wild havoc wrought without any motives higher than those which might prompt the treacheries of Andaman islanders. But when in Greek myths we get away from the circle of human affairs, and find ourselves among the inhabitants of Olympos or of Aithêr, we discern precisely the same indifference to that which we may fairly call Aryan morality in any of its forms: and in Zeus and Hêrê, Artemis and Apollon, sister and brother, wife and husband, we see the original forms of which Signy and Sigmund are the reflexions.

Another story which we encounter at almost every turn in the popular traditions of Northern Europe, is that of the Snake Leaves, or the magic herb which has the power of restoring life to the dead. This story, which we have in the myth of Glaukos and Polyidos, as related by Apollodoros, and in the Hindu tale of Panch Phul Ranee, is obviously connected with the healing and life-giving serpent.[1] Here the remedy is used

Connexion of the Helgi and Volsung stories.

[1] *Mythology Ar. Nat.* Book II. ch. 2. sect. 12.

by Sigmund to bring back to life his son Sinfjötli, whom he has torn in the guise of a wolf,[1] like the Lykeian Apollon or Herakles in the lion's skin. If to these incidents we add the slaughter of the younger children of Signy and Siggeir, which merely repeats that of their elder brothers, we have gone through almost the whole mythical history of the sons of Rerir to the days of Helgi, Hunding's slayer. These causeless murders, on any human explanation, are repeated by Gudrun, and they do but reflect the murder of the children of Iason by their mother Medeia; and thus we have scarcely a single feature in the Helgi sagas which is not seen in the myths of other nations, and which may not be again found in the main body of the Volsung story. But although the story and its several incidents, if judged by a human standard, become incredible or impossible, the myth, like the Icelandic Grettir saga, acquires a deeper and a truer interest, when it is referred to the phrases which determined its shape and character. The darlings of Aphroditê and Eôs return to life after their early death; and in one version Sarpêdôn shares this high destiny with Memnon and Adonis. This thought begins to fade away in the myth of Asklepios, although he himself raises others from the dead, and becomes fainter still in the legends of Achilleus and Odysseus. It is startling to trace precisely the same stream of thought in the stories of Northern Europe. In the lay of Helgi, Hunding's bane, Sigrun takes the place of Eôs weeping over the death of Memnon:—

> O Helgi, thy hair
> Is thick with death's rime:
> With the dew of the dead
> Is my love all dripping:
> Dead cold are the hands
> Of the son of Hogni.
> How for thee, O my king,
> May I win healing?

Her prayers avail so far that Helgi, the phantom horse-

[1] *Mythol. Ar. Nat.* Book II. ch. 2. vol. ii. p. 23.

man in Burger's ballad of Lenore, comes to her on the great mound, where she has dight a bed for him on which she will come and sleep soft as she was wont when her lord was living, and they remain together till the dawn comes, when Helgi must ride on the reddening paths, and his pale horse must tread the highway aloft. The Sagaman adds simply, that 'in old time folk trowed that men should be born again, though the troth be now deemed but an old wife's doting; and so, as folk say, Helgi and Sigrun were born again, and at that tide was he called Helgi the Scathe of Hadding, and she Kara the daughter of Halfdan.' When we reach the story of Sigurd, the destroyer of Fafnir, this old faith, which rested on the re-appearance of Baldur, Osiris, Tammuz, Zagreos, or Adonis, has already grown weaker. The story of Sigurd is the story of Achilleus; and though dire vengeance may be taken for his death, yet he himself is seen on earth no more, and Gudrun in her agony cries out, 'Oh! mindest thou not, Sigurd, the words we spoke that thou wouldest come and look on me, yea, even from thy abiding-place among the dead?'

Such is the simpler form of the myth, which is more fully developed in the Volsúng tale, and attains its utmost growth in the story of the Nibelungs. At every step the points of connexion may be traced without difficulty; and in all we find that recurrence of the original myth under different names, which betrays the limited powers of human invention. As in the Arthur story, no sooner are the adventures of one hero ended than another starts up to do the same things over again, or the same series of exploits is being achieved by two or more knights at the same time. But the main point to be noticed is that the objects of their career and the mode in which they seek to attain them are always the same, and in most cases tell their own tale with a clearness which it is impossible to misapprehend. The story

Fafnir and Regin.

of Sigmund is in its main features the story of the son who avenges him, and Sigurd's victory is won only with the sword which Odin himself had shattered in his father's hand. It is the myth of Theseus, or of Perseus, or of many another hero of more southern lands; but the myth has been modified to suit the harsher climates of Northern Europe. In both it is the uncouth smith of the gods who forges the weapon by which the solar hero is to smite the dragon or worm of darkness and cold, and Fafnir answers probably in name as well as in character to the Delphian Python.[1] But there is a hatred between Regin and Fafnir which we do not find between Hephaistos and Python. The northern myth drew a distinction between the gigantic Hrim-thursar, the powers of frost, or the deadly worm which does their work, and the dwarfs who, like Regin, represent the wonderful properties of the mineral and vegetable kingdoms, the capacity for growth and energy locked up under the surface of the earth.[2] Hence from Regin comes the command which charges Sigurd to slay his kinsman Fafnir and thus to end their quarrel for the treasures which Fafnir had contrived to get into his own keeping. The mode by which this antagonism was brought about is among the most significant features of the legend. The treasures are the ransom by which Odin, Loki, and Hahnir,[3] the gods of the bright heaven, are compelled to purchase their freedom from the sons of Reidmar whose brother, the otter, they have slain. By way of atonement they are not only to fill the otter's skin with gold, but so to cover it with gold that not a white hair upon it shall remain visible; in other words, they are to set the earth free from its fetters of ice, and so to spread over it the golden

[1] Grimm, D. M. 345, regards these words as standing to each other in the relation of θήρ and φήρ. See *Mythology of A. N.* i. 279.

[2] *Ib.* i. 276. Bunsen, *God in History*, ii. 484.

[3] *Mythology A. N.* i. 372.

sunshine that not a single streak of snow shall be seen upon it.

But the most precious thing among the treasures of the dwarf Andvari is the golden ring from which other golden rings are constantly dropping. It is the source of all his wealth, for in fact it is the symbol of the reproductive powers of nature, which in a thousand myths is linked with the wealth-giving rod of Hermes or of Vishnu.[1] On this treasure, whether it be the dower of Brynhild or of Helen, there rests the curse which leads to theft and betrayal, to vengeance and utter ruin; and the doom which Regin brings on Fafnir falls also on himself so soon as Sigurd learns that Regin seeks to cheat him of the dragon's wealth. No sooner, again, is the story of Brynhild ended, than the woful tale is repeated in the sequel of the gloomy history of Gudrun. Brynhild is the peerless maiden who has slept in a charmed slumber caused by the thorn of winter thrust into her right hand by Odin, like the Rakshas' claw which leaves Surya Bai, the sun-maiden, senseless in the Hindu story.[2] One knight alone can rouse her, and that knight is Sigurd. But Brynhild knows that she can never be suffered to dwell with the man whom she loves; and the very vehemence of her love drives her to bring about his death as he lies in the arms of Gudrun. Thus Gudrun, who is the companion of the sun in his middle journey, has yet to be wedded to two husbands, the gloaming and the darkness, or the autumn and the winter's cold;[3] but she resolves that sooner or later Sigurd shall be terribly

The story of Brynhild and Gudrun.

[1] *Popular Romances*, Introd. p. 27. *Myth. A. N.* Book II. ch. 2. sect. xii.

[2] *Ib.* ii. 304.

[3] It is possible that the natural fact which underlies this portion of the Volsung story may have coloured such Icelandic stories as the tale of *Gunnlaug and the Fair Helga*, which is in substance the same as that of the *Lovers of Gudrun*, included among the beautiful narratives of Mr. Morris's *Earthly Paradise*. But this is a point on which it is unnecessary to lay stress.

avenged. The treasures won by Sigurd were in the hands of Gudrun's brothers, and Atli, her second husband, bent on getting possession of them, invites them to a feast and receives them at the spear's point. Hogni and Gunnar are taken prisoners, and Atli, whose name some would seem to think prophetic of the Hun Attila, insists on their yielding up Sigurd's wealth. Gunnar answers that he will do so, if Atli will bring him the heart of his brother Hogni, and on seeing it he tells the king that now the secret rests with himself alone, and that it shall never be tortured from him. He is then thrown into a pit full of snakes, but with the harp of Hermes or of Orpheus he charms the serpents, until, like Ragnar Lodbrog, he is bitten to the heart by an adder which is deaf to his charming. The time for vengeance has now come. The Kolchian Medeia slew the children of Iason after she had sent the death-dealing robe to Glaukê. With fiercer revenge Gudrun feasts Atli at the awful banquet to which Astyagês in the old Greek story invited Harpagos, and then having slain him with the aid of her brother Hogni's son, she makes the whole hall his funeral pile, and sends all Atli's men to bear their master company to the dwelling-place of the dead. Gudrun's lot becomes darker, like the northern summer drawing towards its close. The sea into which she plunges to end her misery bears her away to the land of King Jonakr, and the last act in the terrible drama begins. It is practically a repetition of the scenes which have gone before. Gudrun becomes the wife of Jonakr the lord of the winterland, and mother of his three children, Saurli, Hamdir, and Erp. From her summer home she now summons Swanhild, Sigurd's daughter, whom Jormunrek would have as his wife; but the curse of the treasure still works. Jormunrek's son wooes her for himself, and is slain by his father's command. The beautiful Swanhild is trodden down by the horses of his knights as she combs

out her long golden locks, and Jormunrek himself is slain by two of the sons whom Gudrun had borne to him. The thoughts of Gudrun turn to the golden days when she dwelt with Sigurd, and she passes away from the land of living men, like the last expiring flicker of a dwindling autumn twilight.[1]

In this series of incidents which belong to the great tragedy of the year as clearly as the most transparent Vedic descriptions of Ushas or the Maruts, the dawn-light and the storm, we have more than the framework, not only of the Volsung tale, but also of the Nibelung lay. That the former is virtually reproduced in the latter is disputed by none. The few points of difference lie in the change of a few names. The wife of Siegfried in the lay is not Gudrun but Kriemhild; but Kriemhild, like Gudrun, is the sister of Gunnar, who now becomes Gunther, King of the Burgundians, and, as in the Volsung story, she has to mourn the death of Siegfried, whom Brünhild does to death by means of Hagen. But in its general spirit the story has undergone no change. Siegfried, like Sigurd, is the invincible hero with the sword which no enemy ever withstood. He has bathed his body in the dragon's blood, as Achilleus and Demophoôn were plunged into the bath of fire, and no weapon can hurt him except on one spot between his shoulders on which a linden leaf rested while he bathed, as Achilleus could be wounded only in the heel, and Rustem slain only by the thorn, or Baldur only by the mistletoe. On this spot he is pierced by the spear of Hagen, and from that time forth Kriemhild has no rest until she exacts a vengeance more fearful than that which

The Nibelungenlied.

[1] For a more minute examination of this Saga, see *Mythology Ar. Nat.* Book I. ch. xii., and Dasent, *Popular Tales of the Norse*, Introduction. A shorter summary, exhibiting most clearly the solar character of the whole epic, may be found in Professor Max Müller's *Essay on Comparative Mythology*, *Chips*, ii. 107, *et seq.*

Gudrun wreaked on the murderers of Sigurd, or Odysseus on the robber-suitors of Penelope.[1]

The legend of Walter of Aquitaine.

These older epics, so massive in their outlines, so rich in their details, could not fail to furnish materials for a thousand romances to writers who sat down in their closets to spin stories for a less robust and hardy generation. Thus the Nibelungenlied was watered down until it assumed the form of the legend of Walter of Aquitaine, who plays in it the part of Siegfried. Here, as in the lay, we have the names Gibicho, Gunther, and Etzel, and a possible historical element in the hostages taken to the country of the Huns from Basqueland and the banks of the Rhine, and perhaps also in the description of the life and court of the Hunnish chief, when he returns to his home and to his wife Helche, or, as some call her, Ospirin. But with these exceptions the tale exhibits the old incidents, to which the writer has given a more cheerful ending. Grani, the war-steed of Sigurd, appears here as Lion, and like Grani is able to carry from Etzel's house the heavy treasure which Walter bears away with Hildegund. He is returning to his home in the land where the sun goes down, with the golden hoard which had been the bane of Fafnir and Regin, of Brynhild and Gudrun, of Sigurd and Siegfried. But Walter has to face and to overcome dire perils in the greed and enmity of King Gunther. The lord of Worms resolves that the hoard shall not be carried through the land of the Franks, and with his knights he assails Walter on his journey. But Hagen who accompanies him has lost much of the dauntless courage which marks him in the Nibelung story, and his advice to Gunther is that he should feign a retreat, and thus withdraw

[1] I have here noticed only the leading incidents which form the framework or skeleton of the poem. For a detailed analysis of the Nibelungenlied and the earlier sagas on which it is built up, I must refer the reader to the *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, Book I. ch. xii.

Walter from the stronghold in which he had placed Hildegund and his treasure. This counsel, which is given after the death of many knights, is followed by Gunther, and in the combat which ensues Walter smites off a leg from Gunther's body, and is about to deal him the deathstroke when Hagen interposes his helmet, and the blade of Walter's sword is shivered. In a moment of rashness Walter raises his arm to throw the hilt away, and Hagen, quick as lightning, strikes off his right hand. The penalty for this deed is soon exacted. Walter draws with his left hand his short Hunnish dagger, and tearing Hagen's right eye from its socket casts it on the ground; these incidents being borrowed from the myths which make Zio or Tyr and Indra Savitar[1] lose each his right hand, and speak of Woden as leaving an eye in pledge at the fountain of Mimir.[2] The blood thus drawn is held to wipe away the old enmity; and Hildegund is summoned to perform the office of Asklepios, or Oinônê, or Helgi, the healers.[3] From this point onwards all is smooth. The rivalry of courtesies follows the rivalry of swords and spears, and even Etzel is bidden to the feast when, having reached the hero's home, Hildegund becomes the wife of Walter. More pure than Helen, but not less radiant, she returns from Helen's exile with Helen's wealth, to shed joy and gladness on all around her.

The story of Hugdietrich.

In the story of Hugdietrich we have only another version of the tales in which a maiden is shut up in a lonely tower, and none can approach her except the knight who is destined to win her. Whether it be Danaê or Rapunzel, or the Rose of the Alhambra,[4] all precautions are vain. Craft achieves what force vainly strives to accomplish, and in the guise of the womanly Theseus, or Achilleus, or Dionysos, Hugdietrich finds his

[1] *Myth. A. N.* i. 385. [2] *Ib.* ii. 18. [3] *Ib.* i. 286.
[4] *Ib.* ii. 301.

way to the prison house of Hildeburg, where, like Odysseus, he shows his skill in weaving. The legend of the birth of his child is a travesty of the myths of Cyrus, Romulus, Telephos and many others.[1] In all these the beast takes up the child from a kindly impulse; in the legend of Hugdietrich alone the babe is taken away to be devoured, and it becomes necessary that some one should discover him at once, instead of suffering him to remain like Romulus or Paris in the beast's lair.

The story of Gudrun the daughter of Hettel.

In the story of Gudrun the daughter of Hettel, the name Hagen is given to a child who is carried away, like Ganymedes or Surya Bai, by a griffin to his nest among the rocks, and who there grows up to the strength of manhood, his only companions being three maidens who like himself have been stolen away from their homes. One of these, on his return to his home in Ireland, becomes his wife, and with the birth of his daughter the story starts afresh in the path of the thousand myths which speak of a host of knights wooing a maiden to their own destruction, until the destined hero comes to claim her. But Hilda is scarcely a more prominent person in this portion of the lay than the sweet singer, Horant or Hjärrandi, who appears as Orendil or Aurentil in the Hamlet myths,[2] and is no other than Orpheus or Amphion, Pan or Wäinämöinen. The fortunes of Gudrun, the daughter of Hilda and Hettel, are those of the fearless maidens who are born to be the cause of strife and warfare, and who after long suffering and shameful toil are raised to the glory which is their birthright. In vain Hartmuth of Normandy and Siegfried of Moorland ask her in marriage; in vain Herwig of Zealand seeks to have her as his wife. But more bold than the others, Herwig marches with his knights to the walls of Hegelingen, and in a combat to which he challenges Hettel is wellnigh winning the day

[1] *Myth. A. N.* ii. 74, 83. [2] *Popular Romances*, Introduction, p. 76.

when Gudrun rushes between them. To her prayer that the battle may cease, Herwig yields assent on condition that she will wed with him. The troth is pledged, the words being added that Gudrun never changes. The sequel of the story is a long comment on her invincible fidelity. In revenge for the slight put upon him Siegfried invades Denmark, and while Hettel besieges Siegfried in the fortress to which he has driven him, Hartmuth with his father Ludwig makes a raid on Hegelingen, and carries Gudrun with many of her maidens into Normandy. There Hartmuth seeks vainly to win the love which is pledged for life and death to Herwig; but the catastrophe of the Danish army, and the death of King Hettel who comes to rescue his child, seem to leave to Gudrun no hope of escape from her bondage. Time goes on; fair means and foul are alike employed to work a change in her mind; and the beautiful Gudrun is brought down to the low estate of the royal maidens who, like Cinderella or the Goose Girl of popular stories, are compelled to work among the ashes or the kine. But Gerlinda the mother of Hartmuth, who thinks thus to break her spirit, brings on herself a terrible vengeance, when once more the Danish host comes, and Herwig with them, to rescue Gudrun from her long captivity.

The Frithiof Saga contains, perhaps, an amount of local history larger than that which may exist in the Nibelungenlied; but some of its most striking features it shares with confessedly solar legends. Frithiof himself is invested with the attributes of that large class of solar heroes of whom Herakles may be taken as the most splendid representative. He is the man born to be great, but for a time others are placed at a vantage over him. He is as the son of Alkmênê, the bondsman of Eurystheus, the Boots of popular stories, who must not presume to wed the royal maiden on whom he has set his love. Never-

The story of Frithiof and Ingebjorg.

theless he carries with him the earnest of his great inheritance. The rising of the bright sun-god Baldur, who comes back from the land of the dead to gladden earth and heaven, is the token of the high destiny which awaits him. He bears in his hand the invincible sword of Perseus; on his arm is the magic ring wrought by Wayland the smith, which we have seen among the treasures of Andvari the dwarf; and the good ship Ellide does his bidding like the Phaiakian barks or the marvellous ship of the Æsir. But many a dark cloud must cast its shadow on his path before the sky may shine bright and clear before him. Like Herakles, he must pass through a time of madness such as that which falls on Lancelot and on Tristram. The doom of exile also is upon him, and he must be a wanderer over earth and sea, like Siegfried and Sigurd, like Wuotan and Indra, like Phoibos and Bellerophontes. Like these he achieves mighty exploits; like Herakles and Odysseus he longs to see once more the maiden from whom he has been parted; and at length, when his unwitting offence has been expiated, he wins her as his bride.

The three remaining stories in this volume are the Icelandic tales of Grettir the Strong, of Gunnlaug and Helga, and of Burnt Njal. Taken together they have a significance as showing the differences of material on which the Saga-men worked. The story of Grettir abounds in impossibilities; and of these impossible incidents all, or almost all, occur again and again in tales which are confessedly mythical. That these are too many in number, and of too striking a character to be the result of accident, I have already endeavoured to prove;[1] and the portrait of Grettir himself presents an astonishing likeness to that of the heroes who in Norse and Teutonic popular tales are represented by Boots and

The story of Grettir.

[1] *Mythology A. N.* Book I. ch. 12.

Dummling. Hence it may, I think, be fairly asserted that this saga has few or no distinctive features, and can scarcely be regarded as in any sense a record of incidents in Icelandic life.

This cannot be said of the stories of Gunnlaug and Burnt Njal. Neither of these exhibits the characteristics of the Grettir Saga: and if we cannot shake off the suspicion that the Njal story, in its present shape, is the result of greater exaggeration and over-colouring of details, there is little or nothing in the Gunnlaug tale which may not have occurred in the annals of Icelandic families.[1] The sagas of Gunnlaug and Njal.

A comparison of these two stories with those which precede them in this volume is more especially of service, as showing the classes into which the popular traditions of a country may throw themselves. So surely as we approach the limits of the actual history, whether of nations and tribes, or of families, or of individual men, so surely are we at once removed from that magic circle within which old mythical phrases have produced their magnificent and exuberant harvest: and thus we are enabled to measure the degrees by which the Hellenic traditions of the Trojan war and the Teutonic stories of the Völsungs and Niblungs are removed from tales which, like the Frithiof and Grettir Sagas, may contain a certain amount of local history inextricably imbedded in a mass of mythical details, or which, like the story of Njal, may be simply an over-coloured narrative of events which may really have occurred; or lastly, which, like the Gunnlaug tale, may contain historical statements which, from trustworthy historical documents, we know to be true or approximately true. The myths Classification of popular traditions.

[1] The long grief and the repeated marriages of Helga, which recur in Mr. Morris' poem of the Lovers of Gudrun, may be suggested possibly by the myth of Gudrun in the Völsung tale. But on this point, as I have already said, I do not wish to lay stress.

which have gathered round the Persian Cyrus in his earlier years, and in the closing scenes of his life, cannot affect the historical knowledge which we may have of his career from sources which are beyond suspicion. So long as these sources are clearly ascertained, there can be, it would seem, no possibility of conflict between the comparative mythologist and the historian.

THE STORIES OF THE VOLSUNGS.

I. THE STORY OF SIGMUND AND SIGNY.

SIGI was the son of All-father Odin. One day he went a hunting in a wood with a thrall named Bredi, and because Bredi slew by far the most and the finest of the deer, Sigi was angry at being outdone by a thrall; wherefore he rose up against Bredi and slew him, and hid his body in a snow-drift. For that cause fled Sigi from his father's land; but Odin bare him company lest any should take vengeance on him, and brought him to the sea, and gave him war-ships. Then Sigi went a warring, and made himself a realm in Hunland and there reigned. Howbeit, in his old age they of his own household turned against him, and made a revolt and slew him.

Then arose Rerir his son, who overcame the rebels and stablished afresh the kingdom of his father. And after many years, when King Rerir had accomplished all his vengeance on his enemies, and gotten together much wealth and great possessions, insomuch that he was envied of all kings, he was greatly troubled because he and his wife being fallen into age had no child to come after them; and it seemed to the king as though he had toiled and warred for naught. Then cried they both without ceasing to the gods to give them a child. And Freyja took pity on them and fetched an apple and gave

it into the hands of Ljod her handmaiden, daughter of the giant Hrimnir, to give to the king. So the sky-maid put on the dress of a crow, and came flying to where King Rerir sat musing on a mound, and dropped the apple in his lap. Then the king took the apple and gave it to his wife, and she ate thereof.

In due season the time of the queen's travail came and passed by, yet could she in nowise be lightened. And while she still lay sick, it befell that King Rerir went on a journey to the wars, and on his way a weariness overcame him, and he went home to Odin.

Six years the queen lay in her trouble, neither could she by any means be delivered, till finding herself a dying, she bade them cut the child from out her body. They did as she bade them. She kissed the child at his birth, named him Volsung, and then died. Volsung grew a mighty warrior, stronger and more daring than any of his time. He wedded Ljod, the handmaiden of Freyja, and she bare him, first a son and daughter, Sigmund and Signy, which were twin, and after that nine sons. And all his seed were high-minded and of great hardihood and cunning, in which things the Volsungs far surpassed all other folk before or since.

Now when Volsung's daughter, Signy, was come of age to wed, Siggeir, King of Gothland, came across the sea to ask her for his wife.

Volsung had built a great mead-hall. So big was it that there stood an oak tree named Branstock in the midst, the limbs whereof branched all about the roof, and the roots under-ran all the benches. In this hall Volsung made a feast for Siggeir, and led forth his daughter Signy, and betrothed her to him in presence of his men. But Signy was very loth to the marriage, having no mind towards the King of Gothland; yet in this as in all things she bade her father rule for her.

Now on the day of the wedding feast, at eventide when

the men sate by the firelight at either end of the hall, and the great oak was shadowing the midst in gloom, there came amongst them an old man, one-eyed and of great stature. He was clad in a spotted cloak and linen breeches tight as hosen. He wore a slouched hat on his head, and went barefoot; in his hand was a sword. He took no heed of any, but went straightway to the Branstock and smote the sword up to the hilt into the tree-trunk. Then said he, 'Whoso plucketh out this sword from this stock shall have the same as a gift from me, and shall find in good sooth that never bare he better sword in hand than this.' And the old man passed out: neither durst any question him whence he came or whither he went.

Then each man hasted to be first to try and pull out the sword, thinking it a very easy matter. But beginning with the noblest they all made trial, yet not one of them could pluck it forth. Last of all came Sigmund, Volsung's son, and no sooner did he set finger on the pommel than it loosed itself lightly to his hand.

King Siggeir, beholding how goodly a sword it was, prayed Sigmund to sell it for thrice its weight in gold; and when Sigmund would not, he was very angry, for he coveted the weapon, yet made as though he cared little thereabout, for he was a double-dealing man.

There was fair weather on the morrow after Siggeir and Signy were wed, and Siggeir got ready to cross the sea again, neither would he abide as the custom was for the end of the feast. Then came Signy, pleading to her father that the marriage might be undone, for that she had no liking for her husband, and foreknew, besides, that great evil would befall if she went away with him. But Volsung said there was no help for it, inasmuch as they were all pledged to the wedding. King Siggeir made Volsung promise to come over to Gothland with

his men in three months' time, and there finish the feast: then he set sail with his bride.

At the time appointed Volsung and his sons went over the sea to Gothland to the feast. But as soon as they were come to land, Signy came and talked with her father and brothers privily, saying: 'Siggeir has made ready a great army to fall upon you, wherefore make all speed back to Hunland, and gather together what warships you may, and come and fight with him. But turn back for this time or you will surely be slain.'

'Daughter,' answered Volsung, 'all people know that long ere I was born I spake a vow that I would flee neither from fire nor sword. Men die but once, and I have fought a hundred fights and never prayed for peace.'

Then Signy besought that they would at least let her die with them, and not send her back to King Siggeir. But Volsung said, 'Thou art his; wherefore go back.' So she went back sorrowing.

Now at daybreak King Siggeir made ready his host and led them forth to hunt down Volsung and his handful of folk. A brave fight the Volsungs made against that host. Eight times they hewed their way through, and turned to cut the mass in twain again, but in that fray King Volsung fell and all his men, saving only his ten sons, and these King Siggeir took and bound with cords. Then he carried the ten brethren away to a lonesome wood, and caused a great beam to be brought and set upon their feet. And each night for nine nights as they sate in the stocks, there came ravening from out the wood an old she-wolf, and bit one of the brethren till he died, then ate his flesh and went her way. But on the tenth night when only Sigmund was left alive, Signy sent a trusty man to anoint his face with honey, and to set some in his mouth. That night when the she-wolf came she sniffed the honey, and began licking his face all over with her tongue; and when she had licked it dry, she thrust her tongue into his mouth

for more. Then Sigmund caught her tongue betwixt his teeth and held it fast, and the she-wolf started back and set her feet against the beam and tugged. Sigmund gripped hard with his teeth, and the she-wolf pulled, until the beam was broken in the fierceness of their tussle, and the beast's tongue came out by the roots. So the she-wolf had her bane. Men say that she was Siggeir's mother who by witchcraft took the wolf-shape.

After this, Sigmund being loosed from the stocks dwelt in the woods, and none save his sister Signy knew of his hiding there. He made him an earth-house underground and dwelt therein, and Signy nourished him with victuals.

Signy had two children by King Siggeir, but as soon as ever the eldest was ten years old she sent him away to her brother in the wood, because she would have him trained up to avenge King Volsung's death. One day Sigmund gave the boy the meal-bag and set him to make ready the bread whilst he went to gather firing. But Sigmund, when he came back with the wood, found no bread ready. The boy sat trembling and afraid to put his hand into the meal-bag, saying that there was something alive therein. Wherefore the next time his sister visited him Sigmund said, 'What shall I do with this feeble-hearted brat?' She answered, 'Kill him; there is none of our blood in him.' Sigmund made no more ado but took and slew him. And when Signy's other son was grown of like age she sent him also to her brother; and for the same cause she bade Sigmund slay him.

One day, as Signy sat in her bower, there came a wise witch-wife to her saying, 'Change likenesses with me.' And Signy being willing, the witch-wife took upon herself the likeness of the queen, and in that shape abode for three days with King Siggeir. Then Signy in the guise of the witch-wife came to Sigmund in his earth-house, saying, 'I have strayed in the wood and lost my way. I pray thee give me food and shelter.' And Sigmund knew her not,

but took her in and set meat before her. So for three days and three nights she abode with him in his earth-house. Then she departed and met the witch-wife, and they changed themselves to their proper seeming again.

Afterward Signy bare a child whose name was Sinfjötli. He grew a big and hardy boy; fair of face like the Volsungs. When he was ten years old, Signy sent him to Sigmund. But first she sewed gloves on to his hands through flesh and skin. When she had done the like to the other boys they wept and screamed, but Sinfjötli never winced; nor yet when she flayed off his kirtle, though the skin came off with the sleeves. So soon as the lad was come to the earth-house, Sigmund set him to knead the meal while he went to fetch firing. By the time he got back the bread was made. Then Sigmund asked if he had found aught in the meal. 'Aye,' said the boy, 'there was something quick therein, I know not what; I kneaded it all into the bread.' Sigmund laughed and said, 'Thou hast kneaded the deadliest of vipers in the meal.' Then Sigmund ate the bread, but would not suffer the boy to taste thereof, for Sinfjötli, though he might take no hurt from venom on the outside of him, durst not eat or drink thereof. After that Sigmund took the lad about the woods and trained him to a fierce and hardy life. But he wist not that the boy was his son. They gat wolf-skins from before the door of two men that were skin-changers, and clad themselves therein, and came forth in wolf-shape to slay men for their wealth. Whilst in this guise, it was agreed betwixt them that neither should risk the onset of more than seven men at once without howling for his fellow. And because one day Sinfjötli in his wolf-dress fought eleven men and slew them all, Sigmund finding him after the battle was angry, and ran upon Sinfjötli and worried him by the throat, because he had not called for help. Nevertheless when Sigmund saw the wound he had made in the lad's throat

he was sorry and looked how he might heal him. And as it fell out, he saw a weasel bitten in the throat and how his fellow ran to a thicket and brought a leaf and laid it upon the wound, and the creature was made whole. Then Sigmund got a blade of that same herb, and therewith Sinfjötli's hurt was immediately healed. But when the time came for them to put off their wolf-gear, Sigmund took and burned their dresses lest more harm should befall because of them.

Now Sinfjötli being come to manhood, Sigmund took counsel with him as to how they should come upon King Siggeir to slay him, and accordingly as they agreed, they stole into the porch of the king's hall in the dusk of evening, and hid themselves betwixt the tuns of ale. Signy and the king had two young children; and as these played in the porch with a golden toy, a ring came off and went trundling away among the barrels. And when the children went seeking it, they saw two fierce, wild men crouched down, and away they ran to tell their father. While the king sat doubting, and thinking it no more than a youngster's tale, Signy took both the children and brought them out into the porch, saying to Sigmund, 'Here are the brats that have betrayed you. Slay them!' Sigmund answered, 'Nay, for they did it without guile.' But Sinfjötli came forth from his hiding and drew his sword and slew them both. And he took the bodies and cast them into the hall at Siggeir's feet.

Then up rose the king and his men, and set on so fiercely and in so great numbers that they took Sigmund and Sinfjötli and bound them. The most of that night the king lay awake devising the worst death he could make these men suffer; and on the morrow he had a big barrow made of turf and stones, and a great flat stone set up endwise for a wall in the midst. He set Sigmund and Sinfjötli one on either side of the stone, so that they might hear each other's speech but in no wise come to-

gether. Then he gave the word to cover in the barrow with earth and turf-sods and bury them quick. But as the thralls were working, Signy came and flung an armful of straw into the barrow; and the men kept her counsel.

About nightfall the barrow was closed in. And Sinfjötli began to talk to Sigmund. He said, 'We shall not lack for meat, since the queen hath cast down swine's-flesh on my side wrapped in a bundle of straw; and in the flesh thy sword is sticking.' Then Sinfjötli took out the sword and carved at the stone until he wrought a hole therein. And as soon as Sigmund could grip the sword-point on the other side they set to work and sawed the stone in twain. So being loose in the barrow they cut their way through the earth, and got out into the air some while after midnight. They then went and cut down wood, and set it round about the palace and kindled it. And when the palace was all ablaze Signy came running to the window. Sigmund would have got her out, but she would not.

And Signy said to Sigmund, 'You have done well; but judge if I have forgotten vengeance for King Volsung! Did I begrudge to slay the worthless brats I bare to Siggeir? But I am mother to Sinfjötli! For Siggeir's bane I lodged with thee those three nights in the witch-wife's shape. Be glad; thou art Sinfjötli's father. He is the child of Volsung's son and Volsung's daughter, and by him vengeance has come for Volsung. But I?—*I* come away? and miss to see King Siggeir burn? Nay, brother dear! Merry was I not to wed with Siggeir, but merrily will I die with him.'

Then leaned she from the window and kissed Sigmund her brother, and Sinfjötli, and went blithely back again into the fire and burned with Siggeir and his men.

After this Sigmund and Sinfjötli came back to Hunland, and they put down a man there which had made himself king in Volsung's room; and Sigmund reigned

over Hunland and made himself a name far and wide; moreover, he took to wife Borghild, who bare him two sons, Helgi and Hamund.

Now Sinfjötli must needs go to war again for a woman's sake that was very fair. For this cause he fought with the queen's brother, who likewise had set his love upon the same maiden. And Sinfjötli slew him and won his lands and took the damsel to himself. But Queen Borghild was not to be appeased for the slaying of her brother; and for all Sigmund could do it was a long while before she would let Sinfjötli look upon her face. Howsoever, she bade many great men to the funeral feast, and Sinfjötli came among the rest. And when the queen bare the drink to the guests she filled him a horn saying, with a fair courtesy, 'Drink now, good stepson.' But he looked in the horn and would not taste thereof, for he said, 'A charm is therein.' Then Sigmund laughed and rose up from his seat, and took the horn and drained it at a draught. Again the queen came to Sinfjötli, and mocked him, 'Wilt thou get another man to drink thine ale?' He took the horn, and answered, 'There is guile in the drink.' So Sigmund came and tipped it off. The third time came the queen saying, 'What Volsung doth not drink his drink?' He took the horn into his hand, and said, 'There is venom in the cup.' Sigmund, grown drunken with his ale, cried, 'Then strain it out with thy lips, O son.' So Sinfjötli drank, and fell down dead upon the floor.

Then Sigmund rose up in grievous sorrow. He took the corpse in his arms and bare it away through a wood till he came to a river-mouth. And he was ware of a man in a little boat who asked if he would be ferried across the water; but the boat was so small it would hold but one, so they laid the corpse therein. And immediately corpse and man and boat vanished from Sig-

mund's sight. So he turned and came home; and he put away his queen, and soon after that she died.

King Eylimi had a fair daughter named Hjordis, and Sigmund went to woo her. Thither also came King Lyngi, Hunding's son, on the same errand. And King Eylimi spake to his daughter, saying: 'Thou art a wise woman, wherefore, choose whether of these two kings thou wilt take.' She answered, 'Although he is well stricken in years, I choose Sigmund, since he is the man of greatest fame.'

So Sigmund was wedded to Hjordis and brought her home to Hunland, and King Eylimi came with them. But King Lyngi gathered together his men and came up against Sigmund to fight with him because he had taken away his bride. Sigmund sent Hjordis away into a wood, together with a certain bondmaid, and with all the treasure, to abide there whilst they fought. Then he and King Eylimi set up their banners by the sea and blew the trumpets; but their army was by far the fewest. Old as King Sigmund was he hewed with his sword ever in the thickest of the battle, and smote down men till his arms were red with blood even to the shoulder. Yet neither host gave way.

Now when the battle had lasted some while, there came into the fight an old man in a blue cloak, with a slouched hat on his head. He had but one eye, and in his hand he bare a bill. And when Sigmund lifted up his sword against him, the old man set his bill in the way, so the blade smote upon the bill-edge and shivered in two. But the old man was no more to be seen. Then great dismay spread through Sigmund's host, because his good-hap was departed from him. And though the king cried on his men all he might, they fell fast about him; and by eventide King Sigmund and King Eylimi were fallen in the forefront of the battle, and the war-noise ceased.

At night came Hjordis stealing out of the wood, and went to and fro among the slain, seeking for Sigmund. There was yet a little life in him, and she said, 'Waken, dear lord, thou shalt not die; but we will heal thee to avenge my father.' He answered, 'It may not be; neither will I suffer myself to be healed since Odin has broken my sword. But, behold now, thou wilt bear a child, and I know that he shall grow up the most famous of the Volsungs. Him shalt thou nurture to do thy vengeance; only see thou treasure the shards of my good sword, Gram, for thereof shall a sword be made for him which shall accomplish great wonders. But now I am weary with my wounds, and I would fain go home to my kindred.' So Hjordis sat by him till the dawning, when he died.

Now at sunrise came Alf the Viking, son of Hjalprek King of Denmark, sailing along the coast, who, seeing two women alone with the dead upon a battle-field, leaped ashore with his men and came to them. Then Hjordis told what had befallen, and lest the treasure in the wood should fall into King Lyngi's hands she discovered its hiding-place to Alf, and they got the treasure out and laded the ships therewith; and Hjordis and her handmaid sailed away to Denmark with the Vikings, and came to King Hjalprek's palace and there abode.

II. THE STORY OF HELGI, HUNDING'S BANE.

HELGI was Sigmund's son which Borghild bare. Helgi made a name for himself when he went up to battle against Hunding that mighty king, and slew him and took his lands. So was he Hunding's bane. Afterwards came Hunding's four sons with many warriors, and fought to win back their land, but Helgi overcame them and put their men to the rout.

Now as he was returning from this victory Helgi met a company of exceeding fair women, and the queen of them was Sigrun, King Hogni's daughter. So fair was she that Helgi could not take his eyes off from beholding her, and he spake to her, saying, 'Fare home with me and be my queen.' But Sigrun answered, 'Would that I might, for verily my heart goeth out toward thee, but I have a worse fate to accomplish, since my father hath promised me in marriage to Hodbrod, the son of King Granmar; and him I despise. Go, fight him; win me, and I am thine.'

Then Helgi sent out men with money to hire as many ships as they might. They got together many vessels and near a score thousand men, and Helgi made sail for King Granmar's country. They made the land at Wolfstone, and fought their way ashore. Fierce was the battle that befell; and in the midst there came a company of shield-maidens and fought on Helgi's side, chief of whom was Sigrun, the king's daughter. Then Helgi fell on King Hodbrod and slew him beneath his own banner; and seeing this Sigrun cried out, 'Thou hast done well, and now I pledge thee my troth. We will share the land between us.'

So Helgi, when he had overcome King Granmar and his host, became king of that realm and wedded Sigrun. After that Hogni, Sigrun's father, came up against him because he had taken away his daughter; and with him also came Dag his son. But Helgi slew Hogni, and put his men to the worst; and as for Dag, after he had taken an oath from him to make war on him no more, he let him go in peace. But Dag went his way and sacrificed continually to Odin, praying that he might avenge his father. And at last Odin lent Dag his spear, and with that spear in his hand Dag came seeking Helgi his brother-in-law, and finding him in a place

called Fetter-grove, thrust him through therewith that he died.

Forth rode Dag to his sister Sigrun, to tell her the tidings. 'Lo,' said he, 'Helgi have I slain, and our father is avenged!' Sigrun answered, 'Now are my good days past; no more shall I find gladness in the pleasant sunshine. Cursed be thou for a foul oath-breaker. May thy ship linger when it should sweep the swiftest! May thy steed lag when thou wouldest fain flee fastest from thine enemies! Thy sword, may it never bite till in wrath it singeth round thine head! But as for Helgi, my love, he was chief among all other men, as the ash-tree that riseth from the thorns, or as the antlered deer is above the forest-game.'

Then she raised a barrow above Helgi and gave him a noble burial. And when Helgi was gone up to Valhalla, Odin made him lord over all things there, and Hunding came and served him, and made ready his fire, and tended his hounds and horses.

In the gloaming of the evening there came one of Sigrun's handmaidens to Helgi's mound, and behold she saw Helgi and a great company of dead warriors riding fast about the mound. Then she ran and told her mistress, and Sigrun hasted and came thither, and finding the mound uncovered, she went in and took Helgi's cold head upon her lap. Thus she made her moan: 'O Helgi, my dead love, I hunger for thee as the hawks of Odin hunger for their quarry. See, I kiss thy hair all dripping with cold dews; I take thy hands in mine. O let me warm thee back to life against my breast, and bring the light to those dull eyes again!' And the dead man spake to her. He said: 'Now shall all death-sorrow depart from me if thou wilt dwell with me in my mound; if thou, a fair white maiden, wilt abide in the arms of a dead man.' Then Sigrun commanded a bed to be made ready in the mound, and for all her folk told her that the dead were

stronger and more hurtful in the night-season than in the daylight, she went in thither and lay by her dead lord. But in the early twilight Helgi rose up, saying, 'Hark, I hear the crowing of Salgofnir, the golden cock upon Valhalla. I must ride my pale horse along the reddening ways to Windhelm's bridge. Farewell; the dead ride fast.' Therewith Helgi departed, and after that came no more to the mound. Sigrun watched and waited night by night, till the hope of his coming waned away. Then because of her sorrow she sickened and died.

Of old it was commonly believed that folk should be born again. And it was said that Helgi the Scathe of Hadding, who lived long after, was none other than Helgi, Hunding's bane; and they say that Kara the Valkyrie, daughter of Halfdan, was Sigrun.

III. THE STORY OF SIGURD AND BRYNHILD.

Now soon after Hjordis was come to Hjalprek's palace in Denmark, she bare dead Sigmund's son. They called his name Sigurd, and as he grew up there was no child but loved him. Truly he waxed a man of great might and prowess, and for his high mind and his stout heart he has ever been held above all the men of the north. Regin was his foster-father, and taught him the runes, and to speak with strange tongues, and play at chess, as was the wont of kings' sons. So the boy grew up, and his mother in due time wedded with Alf, King Hjalprek's son.

One day Regin asked Sigurd if he knew how much of his father's treasure the king had, and whether he could trust the king therewith. Sigurd answered, 'Trust him? Aye; why not? I can get it when I want it.' Another time came Regin, saying, 'I marvel truly to see thee run about afoot like a knave. Why doth not the king give

thee a horse to ride?' Sigurd said, 'I need but ask and have.' Therewith he went to King Hjalprek and asked for a horse; and immediately the king bade him go take one for himself, together with whatsoever thing else he desired; for the king loved him as though he were his own son. Wherefore on the next day Sigurd went alone into the wood, and meeting there an old, long-bearded man, he said, 'I am come to choose a horse; give me counsel thereon.' Then the old man drave the horses down into the deeps of the river Busil-tarn; and it fell out that they all swam back to land save a young grey horse whose back no man had crossed. 'Take him,' said the grey-beard, 'he is of Sleipnir's breed;' and saying this the old man vanished away. That old man was Odin; he gave Sigurd the foal Grani which was the best horse in the world.

Regin came again to Sigurd, saying, 'I can tell thee where there is much wealth for the winning and great fame to be got thereby. On the Glistening Heath dwells the dragon Fafnir; he has more treasure than any king ever yet heaped together.' Sigurd said, 'I have heard of this evil worm and how he is so terrible none durst go against him.' Regin answered, 'Nay; men men make a great tale about him, but he is no worse than other lingworms. Thy fathers, the old Volsungs, would have recked little of him.' Sigurd said, 'I am scarce out of my childish years, and have not yet the hardihood of my sires; but why art thou so eager to drive me to this encounter?'

Then Regin told him about Fafnir, saying, 'I had two brothers, Fafnir and Otter. Otter was a great fisher, and by day he put on the shape of an otter, the better to take the fish, but he always brought them home to Hreidmar our father, begrudging nothing. As for Fafnir, he was greedy and grasping, and wanted everything for his own. In the swirl where Otter went fishing abode a

dwarf called Andvari, in the likeness of a pike, for which reason the swirl was named Andvari's force. One day Otter caught a salmon in the force and brought it to land, and when he had eaten it he lay slumbering on the bank. It befell that Loki passed that way with Odin and Hahnir; and Loki, seeing Otter asleep, flung a stone and killed him. Then they flayed off the otter's skin and brought it to Hreidmar's house, and showed him what they had done. But when Hreidmar saw that they had slain his son he was wroth, and immediately laid hands on them, neither would he let them go till they promised to fill the otter-skin with gold, and cover it without with gold. Then went Loki to Ran, and having borrowed her net, cast it into Andvari's force and took the pike; and he made Andvari bring out his gold and fill the otter-skin and cover it without. Andvari gave up all his gold save only one ring, for he said that whoso had that gold-ring should find it his bane. But when the gods brought the otter-skin to Hreidmar he looked at it and spied one of the muzzle-hairs uncovered; and he would have Andvari's last ring to cover that hair withal. Then Loki rejoiced, saying to Hreidmar, "That ring shall be the bane of thee and thy son!" And so it fell out. For Fafnir murdered his father to get the gold, and after that became more grudging than ever. So he grovelled till he grew a worm, the worst of worms, and fell to brooding on his treasure. But I went to King Hjalprek and became his master-smith.' Then Sigurd said, 'If thou wouldst have me slay this dragon, make me now by thy craft a trusty sword.'

Straightway went Regin to his forge and made a sword. When it was done Sigurd took the sword in his hands and smote it on the anvil to prove it, but the blade brake and he cast it away, bidding Regin forge a better. So Regin blew up his fire and made another sword. But Sigurd looked thereon and said, 'A plague

on thy smithying, Regin! Art thou a traitor like all thy kin?' And he took that brand and brake it likewise across the anvil.

Then went Sigurd to his mother Hjordis and asked for the shards of his father's sword Gram. And when he had gotten them he came to Regin in the smithy and bade him weld them together. Regin, grown surly by this time, flung the pieces in the fire and took a welding-heat on them. When the sword was joined, and he bare it from the forge, it seemed to the smith that fire burned along its edges. Then Sigurd took and smote the sword into the anvil, and clave the anvil down to the stock; but the edge of the blade was not turned. He took a lock of wool and flung it in the river against the stream, and cut it clean in two with the sword. And he said, 'It is a good blade.' And Regin said, 'Now I have made a brand for thee thou wilt keep thy troth and go and fight with Fafnir.' But Sigurd answered, 'All in good time, but first I must avenge my father.'

Sigurd went away to Gripir the seer, who knew things to come, and what should happen to men; and he besought Gripir to foreshow him his life. Then spake the seer: 'Thou wilt get riches from a dragon, but thou wilt squander them. Thou shalt win fame from many kings, and there shall come after thee no greater man than thou. Thou shalt learn wisdom from a woman and yet not be wise against women. Thou shalt forget her thou lovest best and woo her for another, and a woman shall be thy bane.' But Sigurd was angry with the seer, and said, 'How could I forget her I loved best?' And he came away.

A little after Regin met him and said, 'Why tarry longer? Go and slay Fafnir.' But he answered, 'I have other work to do.'

Then came Sigurd to King Hjalprek and asked him for men and ships and war-gear wherewith to go and avenge his father on the Hundings. And the king having

furnished him with all he desired, Sigurd steered the noblest of the dragon-keels, and led the way across the green sea-plain. For some days they sailed with fair wind and weather; then the colour faded from the sea, the wan sky gathered thick with piling clouds, the wave-mounds rose, the storm-wind beat their crests to foam, and flung the spume-flakes wide. Like breaking hills the waters tumbled in upon the deck; yet, for all the storm was so fierce, Sigurd would take in no sail, but rather bade his men crowd on the more. No Volsung ever furled sail for any wind that blew. In the midst of the storm a certain man hailed them from a cliff top, and Sigurd steered that way and took him aboard. When they asked his name he said, 'Once when I gladdened Odin's ravens in the battle, men called me Hnikar. Call me that, or Feng or Fjolnir, as you will.' Then Sigurd, being ware that Hnikar knew the fates and what was to come, asked him concerning the things which betoken good and evil to a warrior. Hnikar said, 'It bodeth good for him that goeth to war if he see a dark-winged raven, or two young warriors in a porchway, or if he hear a wolf howl from beneath an ash-tree. To trip the foot when clad for battle is a sorry token, for it showeth that the Disir are on either side of thee, and greedy for thy wounding. The warrior should go forth in the morning well combed, well washed, well fed, so he may endure the toils of the day; but at evening let him fight with his back to the setting sun, that the eyes of his enemy may be dazzled, while his own may see the better.'

Soon afterwards the storm abated, and Hnikar vanished away. And when the vessels were come to Hunland where King Lyngi the Hunding reigned, Sigurd got his men ashore and laid waste the country with fire and sword, and drave the folk inland, so that they fled to their king and told him how the Volsungs were pillaging the shores. Then King Lyngi sent messages throughout his realm and

gat together a great army and came out, he and his brothers, to withstand Sigurd; and an exceeding fierce fight there was. Sigurd went about the battle with his good sword Gram and smote down men and horses till one could not see his mail for blood, and his foes shrank aback before him. He it was who smote Lyngi down, through helm and chine, and slew all the other sons of Hunding; then his men fell on the discomfited host and put the most part of them to death. So Sigurd won back his father's land, and after abiding there for a short space, he came again to Denmark.

He had been but a little while at home when Regin came and minded him of his promise to go and fight Fafnir. So Sigurd gat him ready and rode with Regin to the heath where Fafnir was wont to go to his watering. They saw the mighty track he made, and how it led to a cliff whereon the drake would lie and hang his head over to lap the water thirty fathoms below. 'Thou hast beguiled me, Regin,' said Sigurd, 'in that thou didst say this drake was no bigger than other ling-worms, whereas I see by the track of him that he is very great.' But Regin counselled him to make a pit in the drake's pathway and sit therein, so that when the worm came to his watering he might smite him to the heart. Then said Sigurd, 'Aye, but the blood of so huge a creature will flood the heath, and fill the pit, and drown me therein.' Regin answered, 'What profiteth it to give thee counsel? Thou hast not the courage of thy kindred.' Howbeit, when Sigurd rode away over the heath to seek the dragon, Regin sneaked off and hid himself to save his skin.

Now when Sigurd was at work digging the pit, he was ware of the same old man with the long beard who gave him his horse. The grey-beard bade him dig many pits wherein the blood might run, and then vanished away. So Sigurd made pits all about the heath and hid himself in one of them. Presently the great worm came creeping

along his track, snorting venom as he went, and shaking the earth with his roaring. Sigurd had no fear, but from the pit thrust up his sword and smote the drake beneath the left shoulder to the heart.

Then Fafnir, when he knew he had gotten his death-thrust, lashed out right and left in his madness, and brake to pieces all the trees about him. And he spake to Sigurd, saying, 'Who drove thee to this deed? And who art thou that fearest not my terribleness like other folk?' Sigurd said, 'My heart, my hand, my sword, these urged me to thy slaying. I am Sigmund the Volsung's son, and "an old sire maketh a hardy boy."' Then said Fafnir, 'Rejoice not to win the gold; there is a curse on it, and it shall prove thy bane as it has been mine.' 'Fret not thyself to lose it then,' answered Sigurd, 'for naught it availeth for a man to cling to his gold when his life-day is done; but as for me I will hold it till that day of days.'

Now as soon as Fafnir was dead, Regin crawled out from his hiding-place and began to make great ado, saying, 'Alas! thou hast slain mine own brother, and verily I am not wholly guiltless in this matter.' Sigurd mocked him for hiding in the heather-bush, and bade him take comfort, for that he was guiltless of aught save cowardice. Regin said, 'Boast not thyself, for had it not been for the sharp sword I made thee thou couldst not have prevailed against him.' Sigurd laughed, 'Better in fight is a stout heart than a sharp sword.' Then Regin fell to lamenting again, saying, 'My brother is dead, and, good sooth, but it was I that slew him.' Nevertheless, for all his heaviness, Regin went to the body of the worm and began to drink of Fafnir's blood: and he spake to Sigurd, saying, 'I pray thee cut the heart from out him, bear it to the fire and roast it, and give me to eat.'

Then Sigurd took the drake's heart and set it on a spit and made a fire and roasted it. But as it sputtered in

the fire he laid his finger thereon to try if it were done, and set his finger in his mouth. And so soon as Sigurd tasted of the worm's heart-blood, he understood the voice of all fowls, and knew what the wood birds chattered in the bushes. One said, 'Sigurd, give not the meat to another, but eat it thyself—so shalt thou become the wisest of men.' Another spake, 'Regin doth but beguile thee that he may get the treasure.' 'If I were Sigurd,' said a third, 'I would smite off his head, and save all disputing about the gold.' 'Well magged, gossip,' cried another bird, 'for "where wolf's ears are be sure their teeth are not far off;" and when he has done so, let him ride to Hindfell. There sleeps fair Brynhild, and from her he shall gain great wisdom.'

Sigurd thought within himself, 'Regin shall never be my bane; so let both brothers travel by one road'—and with that he drew his sword Gram and smote off Regin's head by the shoulders. Then straightway the birds broke out a-singing, and in their songs they told of Brynhild, the maiden that lay sleeping in a flaming hall of gold upon the mountain Hindfell; told how Odin struck the sleep-thorn into her because, being a Valkyrie, she had chosen for death in battle one he willed not to be slain; told how only Sigurd might wake her from the torment of her sleep.

Then Sigurd ate of Fafnir's heart and put by the rest; and after that he went and sought out Fafnir's dwelling-place, which was dug deep into the earth, and got the treasure out. There was more gold than two dray-horses could carry, besides the Helm of Awe and the gold Byrnie, and many other precious things. He set the gold in two big chests and laded them upon his horse Grani, whom he would fain have led by the bridle, because the burden was so great; yet would not that good steed stir till his master leaped upon his back. Then, swift as the wind, he

sped away for Hindfell which lies by the land of the Franks.

Now when Sigurd came to the mountain, he saw as it were a flame of fire and a great light go up from Hindfell. And when he reached the top, behold, a shield-hung castle shining with the glory of the gold; above, upon the topmost tower, a banner; but all about was desolate and still. Then went he in. There was silence, save his footfall sounding in the hall. But as he wandered hither and thither he came upon a fair maiden fast asleep and lying in her armour. At first he wist it had been a man, till he took her helmet off and saw the golden locks stream all about her head. So fast was the byrnie set upon her that it seemed to have grown to her flesh; and because of this byrnie in which she went to the wars, the maiden was called Brynhild; but Sigurd cut it with his sword as it had been no more than cloth, and rent it from the collar and tare the sleeves away.

Then Brynhild opened her eyes and said, 'Who has prevailed to rend my byrnie and to deliver me from my long sleep?'

He answered, 'I, Sigurd the Volsung, slayer of Fafnir; I that bear Fafnir's helm upon my head, and Fafnir's bane in my hand; I rent the byrnie.'

Brynhild said, 'Long and wearily have I slumbered! How sweet it is to see the day again, and the bright sky, and the plentiful green earth! It was when Helm Gunnar fought with Agnar, and Odin promised him the victory, that I rebelled against All-Father and chose for death Helm Gunnar in his stead; so Odin pierced me with the sleep-thorn, and doomed me when I woke to love but to possess not; to wed, but not to have my will. Yet vowed I a vow that I would only love a man which knew not fear.'

Then Sigurd besought her to teach him wisdom. Brynhild fetched a beaker and made a love-drink and

bare to him; and while he drank she showed him the hidden lore of the runes that are the root of all things. She taught him runes of war, of love, of feasting, and of healing; showed him words and signs that have power over herbs, and cattle, and men—yea, that compel the Æsir up in Asgard; showed him how and where to carve them, on gold and glass, on mead-horn, on the sword-hilt, on the rudder of the ship, on bough and flower-bud, on chariot-wheel, upon the eagle's bill, and on the witch-wife's seat.

As Sigurd listened, his eyes beheld her beauty whilst she spake; and he said, 'Surely no wiser nor sweeter woman than thou art may be found in the wide world;' therefore will I have thee for mine own, because thou art grown so dear to me.' She answered, 'Though I had all the sons of men to choose from, thee would I take beyond them all.' And so they plighted their troth.

Then Sigurd rode away. His golden shield was wrought with many folds; pictured thereon was the image of the drake, in brown and red. Gold-wrought were his weapons, gold the housings of his horse, and on them all was blazoned the image of the drake, that men might know the slayer of the great worm Fafnir. His hair was golden-red and fell about his face in locks; his beard of the same hue, thick and short: high-nosed he was; high-boned and broad his face; so bright were his eyes that few durst gaze up into them. He was wide as two men betwixt the shoulders; and as for his height, when he girt on his sword Gram which was seven spans long, and passed through standing corn, the sheath-point smote the ears as he went. Persuasive was he of speech, and so wise withal that none could gainsay his words; gentle to his friends, terrible to his enemies; and no man ever shamed him or put him in fear.

Sigurd journeyed till he came to Hlymdale to the dwelling of a great chief named Heimir, who had wedded

Bekkhild, a sister of Brynhild. And since Heimir besought him to tarry awhile, he turned in thither and there abode; and daily went out with Alswid, Heimir's son, for sport with hawk and hound.

Soon after, came Brynhild also to the castle to see her sister; but Sigurd knew not of her coming, neither saw her; for she came unseen and went up and dwelt in a chamber in a high tower. There she sate day by day embroidering upon a cloth with golden thread the slaying of the dragon Fafnir and his brother Regin, and the winning of the treasure. But one time when Sigurd came from hunting, his hawk flew up to a high window in that tower; and climbing after it, Sigurd looked in at the window and saw a maiden, and how she wrought his deeds in gold with wondrous skill and long patience. When he knew that it was Brynhild, he took no more joy in hunting, but left his steed idle in the stall, and his hawks to pine upon their blocks.

Then Alswid asked, what ailed him that he would no longer join their games. He answered, 'I have seen Brynhild, the fairest woman, and in her needlework she works the story of my life; deeds past and deeds to come.' Alswid said, 'It is vain to think of her; for Brynhild has never let a man sit beside her, nor given him drink; she is a war-maid and driveth men to battle to win fame; but none may love her.' 'Nevertheless,' said Sigurd, 'I would make trial and know for certain.' So on the next day he came to Brynhild in her bower and greeted her. She said, 'Glad am I since thou art here, but who shall say if gladness may endure to life's end?' Then he sate down beside her on the bench; and she forbad him not. There came four damsels bearing mead in golden beakers. Brynhild arose and poured the wine and bare to Sigurd, and gave him to drink. He took the beaker; then took the arms that bare it, and drew them about his neck, and kissed her; she forbad him not. And he said, 'Thou art the

fairest maid in all the earth, and I am wholly thine.' But Brynhild said, 'Is it wise to plight all thy faith to a woman? Thou mayest change and break thy pledge.' He answered, 'If my tongue pledged thee not, my heart is fixed for now and ever. I can never change, however long the day till we are wed.' Brynhild, foreknowing what should come to pass, looked up in pain and said, 'Beloved, that day will never come; for it is fated that we may not abide together.' Then waxed Sigurd exceedingly sorrowful and said, 'What fruit shall there be of all our life-days if we are sundered? Harder would it be to bear than the sharp sword-stroke.' She answered sadly, 'Thinkest thou that I have naught to bear? When as a war-maid I set my helm upon my head, and go forth to battle to help the kings, will it be to me a light thing to know that thou art wed to Giuki's daughter—thou whom I love so dear?' Then Sigurd cried, 'God forbid that I should do this thing. Am I a double-hearted man that any maiden should beguile me away from thee? Thee and no other woman I swear to have for mine own, and naught shall ever sunder us.' So with many like words did Sigurd comfort her, and he gave her moreover for a pledge a gold ring. It was Andvari's ring, the last ring of his hoard, which he had cursed, And after they had plighted their troth anew he went his way and joyously hunted with Alswid and his men.

South of the Rhine dwelt king Giuki and his queen Grimhild. There they ruled a wide realm, and had three sons, Gunnar, Hogni and Guttorm, all men of great valour and renown, and an only daughter named Gudrun, who was bright and fair as the summer sunshine. But one night Gudrun dreamed an ill dream, and her joy departed from her, neither would she take pleasure in anything till she should learn what the dream might signify. And when there was no one found within her palace that could read the meaning of the dream, her maidens counselled her

to seek out Brynhild because of her great wisdom, and because she knew the runes which are the root of all things. So Gudrun arrayed herself and her maidens in apparel of great price, and took her journey and came seeking Brynhild.

Brynhild sate in her hall, well knowing who was come seeking her, and she sent to meet Gudrun and her women, and brought them to the castle, and served them there with meat and drink in silver vessels, and gave them good greeting. Then perceiving Gudrun to be somewhat shy of speech, Brynhild began to talk of the great men of the time and their deeds. And when she had spoken of Haki and Hagbard and Sigar and many more, Gudrun said gently, 'Why hast thou not named my brethren, for in truth they are held to be first among mighty men?' Impatient of her words Brynhild answered, 'Of what use to talk of them, or even of those whereof I spake? Hast thou not heard of Sigurd the Volsung? He is king of them all, and more renowned than any man.' Then with fondness in her eyes she told of Sigurd's birth and nourishing, and dwelt with pride upon his deeds. Gudrun said, 'Perchance thou lovest him, and so dost deem him peerless. But Iam saddened with a dream, and have no mind to speak of other things. Wilt thou tell me truly what it betokeneth?' 'I will keep back nothing,' answered Brynhild.

'I thought in my dream,' said Gudrun, 'that as I wandered in a wood with many other maidens, we saw a hart with golden hair, that for its beauty and greatness far excelled the other deer of the forest. We all sought to take him, deeming him more to be desired than all other things. How it befell I know not, but I got him. Then I took and nurtured him, and he grew so dear to me tongue cannot tell, when suddenly there came a fierce woman—'

Brynhild's face grew dark and angry.

Gudrun looked into her eyes and cried, 'O Brynhild, *it was thou! Thou* camest as I fondled him,—'

Brynhild cried fiercely—'Yea. *I* came and shot the deer upon thy knees, gave thee a wolf-cub in his stead, and sprinkled thee with thy brothers' blood. Was that thy dream?'

Gudrun bowed her head and hid her face.

'Then hear the reading of it. Thou wilt take Sigurd from me, but thou shalt not have him long. A mighty strife will come by cause of thee and me, and blood will flow. But woe is me! For I may never win my well-beloved. Away! lest I seek to tempt the Fates again!'

Then Gudrun and her maidens rose up quickly and journeyed home; but Brynhild sat and mused upon her punishment ordained of Odin.

Now Sigurd bade farewell to king Heimir and took his way with his war-gear and treasure and came riding till he reached the hall of King Giuki, who seeing his comeliness, and how he shone in golden array, at first deemed him come down from the gods, but when he learned his name and knew him for the slayer of Fafnir, bade him welcome to abide with them. So Sigurd remained with King Giuki and his sons, and proved himself foremost in all their war-games.

But Giuki's wife, Grimhild, when she saw how goodly a man Sigurd was, and heard him speak continually of Brynhild and his love for her, began to cast about how she might lead him to wed with her daughter Gudrun. For she saw that even her sons held him for a man of far greater prowess than they. So one night when they sate drinking in the mead-hall, the queen arose and bare a subtile drink to Sigurd. Sigurd took the horn, but no sooner had he drank thereof than the remembrance of Brynhild and all his love for her straightway departed from him

And the queen said, 'Why journey further? Abide

with us; Giuki will be thy father, I thy mother; Gunnar and Hogni shall be thy brethren. Tarry here, and we will make a kingdom stronger than any upon earth.'

Sigurd liked her speech, for his memory was stolen away by the inchantment of that drink. So he abode with them, and strengthened the realm; and Giuki and his sons prospered exceedingly and made themselves greatly to be feared of all kings round about, because of Sigurd's abiding there.

Then it befell that as Gudrun poured the mead one night and gave him drink, Sigurd took note how fair she was and full of courtesy. And ever thenceforward his eyes would follow her about and rest upon her face. Giuki was very glad thereof, and came to Sigurd saying, 'Seldom will a king offer his daughter to any man, but rather will wait to be intreated; yet because of thy might and worthiness Gudrun shall be thine; yea, though none other man should get her for all his prayers. Take her to wife and make alliance with us, and go no more away.'

And the thing seemed good to Sigurd, because the maiden was very fair in his eyes; and he answered, 'Great is the honour which thou payest me. Let it be as thou hast said.'

So they made the marriage feast, and Sigurd was wed to Gudrun. He gave his new-made wife to eat of the remnant of Fafnir's heart; so she grew wise and great-hearted.

After that Sigurd fared abroad with Gudrun's brothers, and they won lands and wealth and renown, and became great kings.

When they were returned from their journeyings, Grimhild called Gunnar her son, and said, 'Gold and land hast thou in plenty; yet one thing thou lackest, my son, in that thou art unwed. Go now and woo Brynhild, for of all women there is none more meet for a king's bride.'

So Gunnar spake to his brethren and to Sigurd, and they all rode with him over hill and dale till they came to King Budli's house, and asked his daughter of him. But Budli answered, 'I cannot say you yea nor nay, since Brynhild is so high-minded; she will wed whom she will. Go, and may your wooing prosper.' Then came they to Heimir in Hlymdale. He told how Brynhild abode upon the mountain Hindfell, in a castle girt about with fire, and how she swore to wed that man alone who should ride through and come to her.

So they took their journey and rode up the steep sides of Hindfell, when lo they saw a castle with a golden roof-tree, hedged all about with roaring flames.

Straightway Gunnar put his horse to face the fire, and smote the spurs into his flanks: but the horse stood shuddering, and backed and reared, but would not go forward. 'Lend me thy horse Grani,' said Gunnar to Sigurd, 'for mine will not tread this fire.' With right good will Sigurd got him down from off his horse, and Gunnar mounted him. Grani galloped to the fire, but there stood still: neither for all Gunnar could do would he go into the flame.

Then Sigurd said, 'I will compass the matter for thee;' so he and Gunnar changed likenesses. And Sigurd taking upon himself the shape and seeming of Gunnar, mounted Grani. Now when he had his master on his back, and felt his golden spurs, Grani leaped blithely into the fire. Fiercer the flames uprose and licked the sky; red rolled the clouds; the earth shook with the roaring of the fire. Yet Sigurd rode on, and with his good sword Gram he cut the flames to right and left, and laid them low. So the fire slaked and he rode on and through, and reached the palace, where sate Brynhild in her byrnie, proud as swan on wave, her helmet on her head, her sword in hand. He lighted off his horse and came into the hall.

She asked him, 'Who art thou? What wouldest thou in my hall?'

Sigurd answered, 'I am Gunnar, son of King Giuki. For thee I have ridden through the fire, and now I claim thee for my wife.'

Heavily she spake: 'I have little mind to wed. O, Gunnar, save thou be the best and chiefest among men I pray thee go thy way. For I have been in battle with the kings; red is my sword with the blood of warriors; and still I hanker after war.'

He said, 'I, Gunnar, have ridden through the fire for thee; and by thine oath, for weal or woe, do I constrain thee.'

Then because of her oath Brynhild rose from her seat and greeted him as her lord, and served him at the table. Three nights lay Sigurd beside her in her bed; but betwixt them he set his naked sword-blade. And when she would know why the sword lay there, he told her that so it was fated he should wed his wife.

And after three days when Sigurd would depart, Brynhild drew from her finger the ring which he had given her before—the ring which Andvari had cursed—and set it for a pledge upon his hand. He gave her another ring from Fafnir's treasure; then rode back through the fire and came to Gunnar. The men changed semblances again and journeyed homeward.

Then came Brynhild to Heimir her brother-in-law, saying, 'Behold, a king named Gunnar rode through my fire. Truly I weened no man save Sigurd, my beloved, should have dared those flames. But Gunnar trode the fire and I am his.' He answered, 'Who can ever tell what shall be? Who can alter that which is?'

Afterward King Giuki and Grimhild his queen held a great feast, and made a wedding for their son. King Budli came; with him his daughter Brynhild, and Atli her brother; Sigurd and Gudrun were there. Great was

the joy at the feast, and great was the rejoicing throughout the realm, because Gunnar was married to the fair Brynhild. They twain sate together at the table in the mead-hall, and pledged each other in the wine-cup.

But Sigurd went away apart and groaned in spirit; for at that feast his memory came back. He thought upon his broken oaths; knew what he had won and lost, and gloom fell on him.

One day the two queens went bathing in the river together; and seeing Brynhild go much further out into the water than she dared venture, Gudrun asked wherefore she did this. Brynhild answered, 'Why should not I surpass thee in all things? Thy husband is but King Hjalprek's thrall. Mine is the foremost among men. Gunnar rode through the fire for me.'

Then Gudrun's anger was kindled against Brynhild because she reviled her husband; and she answered, 'Were it not better to hold thy peace as I have done? Why revilest thou my lord? Who but the slayer of Fafnir rode through thy fire and lay beside thee? Who but Sigurd the first of men? See on my hand the ring thou gavest him, Andvari's ring!'

Very pale waxed Brynhild. She knew the ring; and answered not, but clad herself and went her way.

Next day came Gudrun to Brynhild in her bower, saying, 'Why grievest thou? Hast thou not wedded him whom thou didst choose? My brother Gunnar is a mighty man. Sure there is none nobler in thine eyes, none dearer to thine heart,—not even Hjalprek's thrall?'

Then said Brynhild: 'Cruel and hard of heart art thou. Why wilt thou triumph over me? Thou hast taken my love, the noblest man upon the earth. I loved him because of his glory and his might. I love him yet, him only. What is Gunnar beside Sigurd? Be satisfied; thou hast him. Love him, for thy time is short. Aye;

take him fast within thine arms. But hold thy peace. Tempt me not on to break with Fate and snatch him from thee ere the hour be come. Yet how can I bear to know thou hast him even for a little moment! Thou with thy littleness of heart and poverty of love! He with his mighty soul and peerless manliness! So cold a thing as thou couldst not have won the man that knew my burning love, save thou hadst drugged his mind to sleep and robbed his memory of my very name.'

Then went Brynhild up into her chamber, and fell down upon her bed. Wan as a dead woman she grew. She spake no word, because of the bitterness of the thoughts within her. Presently came Gunnar seeking what ailed her, and after he had urged her long, she cried, 'Go from me! I am not thine. Thou didst not dare the fire. With guile hast thou gotten me; with guile thy mother stole my troth-plight's love from me. No king, no champion thou art, but a common man who in the danger-time turns pale and quakes for fear. I swore to wed the noblest man alive: I loathe thee since thou art not he. Privily hast thou beguiled me, but openly and not without warning will I reward thee. Guard thyself quickly, for now is thy death-day come!'

Then leapt she from the bed and drew her sword, and fell upon King Gunnar, and straightway would have taken his life, but Hogni, his brother, came running in; and betwixt them they got her down and bound her fast.

Nevertheless in a little while it repented Gunnar that he had bound her, and he came and set her free. Yet would not Brynhild any the more be appeased. She said, 'Never again in bower or hall shall I make merry or be glad. No words of kindness shall I ever speak or hear. No more my fingers shall do woman's work.' Then went she to her needlework wherein were wrought in gold and divers colours Sigurd's deeds, and rent it in pieces; and she passed up into her bower and set open the doors so

that the noise of her wailing was heard afar; and ever she made her moan, 'Give me Sigurd, or I die.' So she cried out in her bitter sorrow till, grief-wearied, she fell asleep.

Seven days she slept, and none could waken her. Her bower-maidens feared greatly, and said one to another, 'The wrath of the gods has fallen on her.'

When Gudrun heard it she repented of her ill words, and had great pity of heart for Brynhild. And Gudrun went with Gunnar to seek to waken her, but in vain; and after that she came with Hogni, yet could they not get speech of her. Then Gudrun besought Sigurd to go, for she said, 'Peradventure thou wilt waken her; but O, my lord, be tender to her, for her grief is very sore and hard to bear.' So Sigurd went up into her chamber and lifted up his voice and cried, 'Awake Brynhild! For the night is past and the sun shineth all about thee.' Brynhild heard his voice and opened her eyes.

'Why art thou come?' she said. 'Too late hast thou remembered me; for now thou art become the cause of all my pain.'

Sigurd answered, 'Never had I aught but tenderness in my heart for thee; but who can alter fate? What is, must needs be borne. Thou hast a noble husband; love him and be happy.'

'How canst thou counsel me so?' she said. 'Is the past all past? And hast thou clean forgot thy troth-plight; and how thou didst ride through the fire and win me for thine own? My eyes have long been veiled; and yet, methought that thou, not Gunnar, didst tread the flames and come into my hall. And now that I know it, I hate him bitterly.'

Then Sigurd said, 'I marvel that thou lovest not Gunnar, for he is a brave man; more to be desired is his love than much red gold. Wherefore turn thine heart toward him and forget all else.'

She said, 'O Sigurd, thou dost root all gentleness from out my breast. How canst thou teach me to love aught but thee? Rather would I see my sword red with thy blood than hear this counsel from thy lips. For now am I become loathsome in thy sight; and thou knowest neither the heart that is in me, nor how fierce the love I bear thee.'

'Brynhild,' he said, 'I loved thee better than my life; and when I found too late that I was beguiled, sore was my pain. But I have sought to live it down, and to put my trouble from me as a king should do. I pity thee, for I have borne a heavy heart full long.'

'Thy grief and pity come too late,' she cried; 'thou art not mine but Gudrun's; thou lovest her; wherefore my life is become hateful to me, and I will not live.'

He answered, 'It is true. Gudrun has grown dear to me; I love her. Yet, rather than thou shouldest die I will put her away, and wed with thee.' Thereat his heart so heaved within his breast that the rings of his mail-coat burst asunder.

She cried, 'I will not have thee. Thou lovest her. Go to her! Leave me to myself.'

With a heavy heart rose Sigurd and went his way. But Brynhild fell weeping afresh; and when her tears were done very dreadful grew her mind. Gunnar came to her, and she said, 'Sigurd has talked with me, and I have showed him all my heart. Little he careth for my pain since Gudrun has won his love away. He pities me, and bids me give my love to thee. Now he has gone to Gudrun, to tell my grief for her to mock at me. It is too hard to bear. She shall not have him! Either he, or I, or thou shalt die.'

Then spake Gunnar, 'How can I assuage thy sorrow? For with all thy frowardness to me I love thee; yet for that same cause is my life grown burdensome.'

And Brynhild answered: 'I cannot bear that she should

have my Sigurd and mock my woe. Gunnar, I loathe thee; yet if thou wouldst slay him in her arms, I feel almost that I could love thee. I should be merry at her grief. Go, slay him; else thou shalt lose thy kingdom and thy wealth, thy life and me; for of a truth I will not rest till I have shed thy blood. For myself, I care not; I shall go away and sleep alone among my kin.'

Then was King Gunnar sore troubled. He thought, 'Rather would I lay down my life than lose Brynhild, whose love is dearer to me than all else. Yet how can I break sworn oaths and promises given?' So he came to his brother Hogni, and said, 'Much it grieveth me, but Sigurd must needs be slain; go thou and do it, for he is false and hath betrayed me to Brynhild.' Hogni said; 'Nay, for we have pledged him our faith, and the sworn oath may not be broken.' Howbeit they took counsel together, and determined to stir up their younger brother Guttorm to the deed, since he was clean of any oath to Sigurd. Then they fetched Guttorm and promised him power and dominion if he would do this thing; and they took and seethed him a pottage of wolf-meat and of strange worms and fish, and gave him to eat; so he grew fierce and thirsted after blood.

In the morning came Guttorm stealthily to the door of the chamber where Sigurd was, and peeped in. Gudrun lay sleeping on his bosom; her white arms clasped about his neck. Twice Guttorm stole in at the door, and twice shrank back; for he thought he saw the glitter of his eyes. The third time he ran in, sword in hand, and thrust Sigurd through therewith, so that the sword smote fast into the bed and pinned him there. Guttorm turned to flee, but never reached the door; for Sigurd caught his sword Gram by the hilt and flung it after him, and cut him clean asunder at the waist; so he fell dead in the doorway, head and shoulders one way, and legs and groin the other. When Gudrun awoke from her soft sleep, and felt the..

blood all streaming about, and saw her lord death-smitten, she wept and bewailed so piteously that Sigurd as he lay a-dying lifted his head and kissed her. 'Weep not,' he said; 'death cometh to us all; this was foretold to me, but when it drew near it was hidden from mine eyes lest I should fight with Fate. Brynhild has wrought my death because she loved me before all men; yet little have I deserved this treachery from thy brethren.' Sigurd closed his eyes; fast ebbed the life-tide through his wound. He drew a weary breath, and yielded up the ghost.

Then Gudrun in her sharp sorrow gave a very bitter cry. Brynhild heard it in her bower, and loud laughed she. Gunnar shuddered as he heard her laugh. But Brynhild, still laughing fiercely, went out and caught up Gudrun's child and slew it.

Now it came to pass when Gudrun sate over the dead body of her lord, that her anguish fell very heavy on her, so that she was like to die. She sighed not, nor moaned, neither smote she her hands together like other women. She shook as though her heart would break. But she could not weep. Many wise Yarls came seeking to comfort her.

Hushed sate Gudrun; she spake not; the tears came not.

They said, 'Make her weep, or she will die.'

There came many noble Yarls' wives arrayed with gold, and sate beside her. Each told the sharpest sorrow she had known. Giaflaug, Giuki's sister, said, 'Of husband and children have I been bereft; of all my brethren and sisters. Lo, I am left behind to mourn until I go to them.'

Gudrun wept not.

Herborg, Queen of Hunland, said, 'My husband and seven sons fell in one fight. A captive was I carried away into a strange land, and there they set me to tie the

shoe-latchets of that king's wife who slew them all; often was I beaten with the lash, and then only did I dare to sorrow for my dead.'

Yet none the more might Gudrun weep; so sad was she.

Then Gullrond, Giuki's daughter, came. She said, 'No sorrow but her own will bring the tears.' Down from the dead man's face she drew the cere-cloth, and turned the death-cold cheek to Gudrun, saying, 'Sister, look on him! Come, lay thy lips to his, and kiss him; for he loved thee well.'

She looked once only: saw the golden hair all stiff with blood; the body broken with the sword-rent. The tears upwelled and rained upon her knees. Fast wept Gudrun, Giuki's daughter.

Then she found words and spake: 'Like the bulrush towering from the grass, such was my Sigurd among Giuki's sons. As a pearl of price upon a king's brow, so glorious was my Sigurd among men. How shall I sit upon my seat, or go up to my bed, and miss my Sigurd? Cursed be thou, Gunnar, for thy broken oaths! And cursed be the day when Sigurd saddled Grani to go a-wooing of Brynhild on the mountain!' Then cried Brynhild, 'A curse on her who brought thy tears and gave thee speech again!' And Gullrond said, 'Hast thou no pity—no compassion? Away, thou bane of man, thou woe of woman! Luckless thou camest to thy mother's lap, born for the sorrow of all folk.'

Sigurd's horse Grani, when he saw his master's corpse, made such a pitiful crying that Gudrun was fain to go and speak with him, even as a man talks with his friend. But he drooped his head and sank down on the earth and died.

By a pillar stood Brynhild, gazing on Sigurd's wound, and gloating over the woe of Gudrun. Howbeit Brynhild went presently up into her chamber and fell weeping

bitterly. Gunnar and Hogni came to her, but naught their words availed to soothe her dreadful mind. She said, 'Sigurd is mine. Whither he goeth I will go; and none shall keep me from him now.'

Then Gunnar arose, and took her in his arms, and besought her that she would not die, but live, because of the love wherewith he loved her. But she put him from her, and would suffer none to hinder her. Then commanded she her people to bring forth gold and scatter it about. And when they had done according to her will, she took a sword and thrust herself through therewith beneath the arm-pit, and sank upon her pillows saying, 'Whoso will, let him come and take my gold and be glad thereof.'

Lying there, the while her blood flowed fast, Brynhild prophesied, and spake concerning all that should happen to the sons of Giuki and their kin, and of the sorrows yet in store for Gudrun.

Then her voice grew very tender, and she said to Gunnar, 'And now I beg the last boon I shall ask in this world. I pray thee raise a tall wood pile, and deck it royally about with shields and fair hangings. Uplift me thereon when I am dead, and bring Sigurd and lay him by my side. Only let there be set betwixt us a drawn sword, even as in those three days when we lay in one bed and were called man and wife together. So, as we go up to Valhalla, the shining door that openeth for him shall not swing to and shut me out.'

So saying, the life passed from her. Dead lay Brynhild on her pillows. Gunnar did all things as she had said. He built a mighty wood pile, hung round about with goodly hangings and strewn with treasure; with hawks and hounds at the head and foot. On the pile he laid Brynhild and Sigurd; betwixt them a drawn sword. Then kindled he the bale-fire. The flames arose and wrapped the pile, and roared up to the sky. So ended they their life-days.

IV. THE FALL OF THE GIUKINGS.

Now Gudrun, being very bitter against her brethren, went away alone to mourn for Sigurd, and made her dwelling in the woods. And after long abiding there, she wandered forth, and came to King Alf's palace in Denmark, where, for seven years she solaced her mind with setting forth in needlework of many colours the glorious deeds of kings and warriors. But when Queen Grimhild knew of her harbouring in Denmark she came journeying thither with her sons Gunnar and Hogni, and a great company of folk bringing gold and silver, seeking to make atonement to Gudrun for the slaying of her husband and her son. Softly they spake to her and would fain be reconciled. Howbeit Gudrun answered them nothing, and took no heed either of them or of their gifts.

Then Grimhild mixed a cold drink, and bare to Gudrun in a horn whereon strange blood-red runes were cut about the rim. The might of earth and sea was mingled in that drink. And it befell when Gudrun had drank of it that the memory of her wrongs passed away, and she remembered no more the blood-guiltiness of her brethren towards her. So after they had held fellowship together and made good cheer, Grimhild spake to Gudrun to wed with Atli, Budli's son, saying it would surely redound to the profit of them all, inasmuch as Atli was a king of great might. Gudrun was very loth thereto, thinking it an unseemly thing for her to wed with Brynhild's brother; but they so beset her with promises and threats that at last she yielded, saying, 'Little joy and great sorrow will come of it.' Lightly esteeming her words, they all made ready and set out and journeyed twelve days by land and sea, till they came to King Atli's mead-hall. There the Giukings

gave their sister to Atli, to be his wife, and after the feast they rose up and departed to their own land. But Gudrun did not make merry, nor were her eyes bright like a bride's, nor was her heart gladdened when she looked upon her husband.

Years wore on and there was little fondness betwixt the two. Many times Atli fell thinking of the treasure which Sigurd gat from Fafnir, and how by right it should have been Gudrun's dower, whereas her brethren kept it back. And when he coveted the treasure very sore, Atli determined to send out men to go to the Giukings and bid them to a feast. But Gudrun got wind of it, and fearing some treachery to her brethren, took a gold ring and cut runes thereon to warn them not to come: and she knitted a wolf's hair in the ring and gave it to the messengers to take to Gunnar. But while they were on the journey, one of the messengers more subtile than the rest, by name Vingi, perceived how the runes ran; and he meddled with them in such wise as to make it seem as if Gudrun in her runes had prayed her brethren to come.

The messengers being come to Gunnar and Hogni in their mead-hall, the kings outpoured the wine and bade them welcome. And when the message was delivered, Hogni took his sister's ring and read the runes; but misdoubting them, he said: 'Brother, truly Gudrun in her runes saith "Come"; but what meaneth this wolf's hair in the ring, save a warning that Atli is minded as a wolf toward us?' Gunnar hearkened not. Merry over the mead he sate and listened whilst the smooth-tongued Vingi told how Atli was grown old, how his young children could not ward the realm, and how the purport of the bidding was to make the Giukings rulers over all the land. Loud laughed Gunnar, carousing with the messengers, and he raised aloft the mead-horn and passed his word to go. Hogni liked it not. He said: 'Too

rashly hast thou pledged; but this being so, I will go with thee; yet very loth am I to the journey.'

Many tokenings there were of ill. Hogni's wife, Kostbera, who was skilled in runes, perceived that someone had tampered with the letters upon Gudrun's ring, and this she told Hogni plainly. Moreover, Kostbera dreamed of a rushing river that broke through the mead-hall, and of fire that burned the roof-tree; of a bear that overthrew the king's high seat, and of an erne that trampled women down and drenched them with warm blood. But Hogni made light of the dreams, or expounded them away in other fashion: for to none is it given to swerve from the fate shapen for him. In like manner Glaumvor, Gunnar's wife, told her lord what she had dreamed. She said: 'Methought I saw thee thrust through with a bloody sword, at either end whereof wolves howled. Sure that betokeneth somewhat?' 'Aye,' Gunnar said, 'a bloody sword betokeneth the biting of curs. A dog, perchance, shall snap at me.' She said, 'But I dreamed again, and lo! three silent women, veiled and gloomy, came and chose thee for their mate. Methought they were thy fates.' He answered: 'Who can tell? It may be that my life-days are but few.' And when he rose up in the morning, he called his men about him and said, 'Come let us drink the goodliest wine from out the big old tuns, for may happen this shall be the last of all our feasts together.'

That same day Gunnar and Hogni gathered their folk together and took ship with the messengers. Hard they rowed across the sea-plain till they saw land, and brought the ship ashore; then leaped upon their steeds, and journeyed through the murky woodland. At last they came out into open country. In front they saw a mighty host of men which King Atli had arrayed, and heard from afar the clanging of their weapons. Fast were the burg gates and full of men; but the Giukings brake down the

gates and came into the burg. Then spake Vingi: 'How softly and with what sweet words did I beguile you hither! But now, tarry here a little, while I go and choose your gallows-tree.' Hogni answered: 'Little shall it avail thee to have beguiled us,' and so saying cast Vingi to the ground, and slew him with the hammer of his axe.

Then rode they to the king's hall, where sat Atli with his men about him. Atli gave them no greeting, but said: 'Deliver up Sigurd's gold; for it is Gudrun's portion, and long have I been minded to be lord thereof.' Gunnar answered: 'Thou shalt never have that gold; and if that be the purport of thy feast behold we are men of might, and shall not shrink to deal with thee in this matter.'

Straightway uprose the king and his men, and fell upon the Giukings. The tables were overset, the mead-cups rolled upon the floor. Hot waxed the fighting in the hall, and quickly spread about the burg. Gudrun heard tidings of it, and flung off her mantle and ran into the battle. Tenderly she kissed both her dear brethren, and said: 'Vain was my warning, for how shall a man avoid his lot! But yet there is time to seek for peace.' 'Too late,' they answered, 'for blood is outpoured, and many sleep the sword-sleep.' Then Gudrun put on a mail-coat and took a sword and fought beside her brethren, brave as they. Men fell fast on either side, and heaped the place with dead; the blood ran all about and mingled with the mead. Gunnar and Hogni went to and fro through Atli's folk, and wheresoever they went they reaped and men went down. At mid-day there was a lull in the battle; bitter was Atli's mind at the thinning of his host, yet still they were a host, the Giukings but a handful. Then they fell to again. Atli cried on his men to drive the Giukings from the hall, and overwhelm them on the plain; but so hard the Giukings pressed on Atli's folk

that they drave them back into the hall again. Then began within doors the fiercest of fights. Gunnar and his warriors hewed ever with their swords, but fast as they slew their enemies, fresh men poured in to take the places of them which fell. So at length when Gunnar would gather his folk together, he looked about and saw only his brother Hogni left alive. Then they twain set them back to back, and fought for their lives right manfully. But first Gunnar was hemmed in and taken alive. After that, Hogni slew a score of Atli's stoutest champions, and cast well nigh as many into the fire that burned in the midst of the hall: yet in the end he likewise was borne down by numbers, and with his brother bound in chains.

Atli was very wroth, and spake to Hogni saying, 'Now will I cut the heart out from thee before thine eyes, because by thy hand so many of my champions lie bereft of life.' Hogni answered: 'Do it, and thou shalt see a heart that never quailed.' But one came to Atli and counselled him saying, 'Let us rather take and put the thrall Hjalli to death: for naught else is he fit, and there is no ransoming to be gotten for him.' When Hjalli the thrall heard this, he began to cry aloud, weeping and screaming and bewailing himself or ever he felt the point of the knife: for an evil and a bitter thing it seemed to him to be cut off for ever from life and from the feeding of swine. Hogni, hearing him shriek and yell, pleaded for the man's life, saying that he would blithely endure that or any other death himself, if thereby he might be delivered from the thrall's uproar. So for that time Hjalli's life was spared.

Then were Gunnar and Hogni led away to prison in their fetters, and put in dungeons apart the one from the other. And King Atli came to Gunnar in his prison, saying, 'Tell me concerning Sigurd's gold, where thou hast hidden it, and I will spare thy life.' Gunnar

answered, 'I will tell thee nothing unless I first behold the heart of Hogni my brother.'

Atli's men went and laid hold of the thrall and cut the heart out of him, and brought it to King Gunnar. But when he saw it, Gunnar said, 'That is a thrall's heart; it is the faint heart of Hjalli. See how it trembleth now; yet not so much as when it dwelt within his breast.'

Then went they unto Hogni in his prison. Hogni flinched not. Loud laughed he while they cut the heart from out of him, so that all wondered at the might of his manhood. They brought the heart to Gunnar, and he said, 'That is a brave king's heart; it is the stout heart of Hogni my brother. Little it trembleth now; and less it trembled when it lay within his breast.' Then Atli asked him, 'Tell me now where is thy gold?' But Gunnar laughed him to scorn, saying, 'While Hogni was yet alive I feared, betwixt the two of us, lest the matter should leak out. Now, I alone know where the treasure is; and the secret is safe.'

Then waxed King Atli very wroth, and he commanded his servants and they took Gunnar and bound his hands fast with cords and cast him into a pit of vipers. Howbeit Gudrun let a harp down to him in the pit, and thereon King Gunnar harped so skilfully with his feet that none hearing it would deem other than that he played with his hands. And with the might of his music he charmed the vipers to sleep, all save one old and deadly adder which twined up his breast and smote its sting into him that he died.

After these things King Atli grew highly exalted, and was fain to make himself great in Gudrun's eyes because he had slain her brethren. And since Gudrun made no complaining but rather behaved herself kindlier to the king, saying that since all her kindred were dead and gone she had now none else to hold to but her husband, Atli deemed her heart was rightwise toward him. So

when Gudrun would make a great funeral feast for her brethren, he hearkened gladly, and sent and summoned all his chief men from far and near to come to the mead-hall. Very great and sumptuous he made that feast, for the glory of himself and of his kingdom. And after meat, when all sat drinking round the board, the king spake to Gudrun to fetch their children to the table, for he said, 'It will gladden my heart to look upon the sons of thee and me while we make merry with the wine.' She answered him, 'Thy sons are here. Behold, their skulls are beakers at thy board; their blood is mingled with the wine which thou hast drunk; their hearts I roasted on a spit, and thou hast eaten thereof. So was I set to do thee as great shame as I might; yet in nowise shall the measure of thy deeds be full.' Then the king grew sick at heart, and said, 'Quick and bloody has been thy vengeance; but for this deed of thine most meet it were to stone thee and burn thy body on the bale-fire.' She answered, 'For me another death is shapen, but see thou rather and foretell thine own.'

Now Hogni had a son named Niblung. He came to the feast, the heart within him burning to requite his father's death; and Gudrun and he took counsel together how they might bring it about. So at night, when the king had well drunk and was gone up to his bed, they both came stealing into the chamber where he lay. Gudrun bare a sword in her hand, and Hogni's son grasped both hand and hilt in his, and together they drave it into the king's breast. Awaking with the wound, King Atli cried, 'Who art thou that hast done this deed?' There came the answer, 'I, Gudrun, thrust somewhat with my hand; somewhat the son of Hogni thrust; and we are both avenged!' Then Atli besought her with his last breath, saying, 'Now that the wrong betwixt us has been fully requited, I pray thee do no despite unto my dead corpse, but make me a kingly funeral.' When she had so pro-

mised him, King Atli died. And Gudrun did according to her word, for she and Hogni's son went out quickly and kindled the palace all about. Within were all the nobles and the mighty men of Atli's realm; and when they woke and felt the flames they ran hither and thither in their distress, and smote each other down or fell upon their swords rather than abide the fire. So perished Atli and all his folk with him.

Then Gudrun, grown weary of her life and longing to die, came down to the sea-shore where the billows tumbled round the rocks and boiled upon the beach. Within her arms she clasped great stones and cast herself into the sea. Yet would not the sea drown her; the waves upbore her on their crests and carried her far away to the burg of King Jonakr. He took Gudrun to wife, and she bare him three children whose names were Hamdir, Saurli, and Erp.

Now Gudrun had by Sigurd a daughter called Swanhild; and she sent across the sea and fetched her to Jonakr's court. Swanhild was an exceeding fair woman, with eyes bright like her father's, so that few durst gaze up into them. And it came to pass that a certain King Jormunrek, hearing how she far excelled all other women as the sun outshines the stars of the firmament, sent by the hands of Randver his son, and Bikki his counsellor, seeking her in marriage. And Jonakr and Gudrun, thinking it an alliance of great honour, gave Swanhild to them to be Jormunrek's wife, and the maiden sailed away with them in their ship. But while they were upon the voyage Bikki counselled Randver the king's son, saying, 'Why take so lovely a woman to that old man thy father to be his wife? More meet it were to woo her for thyself.' And the saying pleased Randver; and with many sweet words he began to woo Swanhild; in like manner also she answered him again. Nevertheless as soon as they were come to land Bikki went to the king and said, 'Truly a

hard thing it is to speak evil of the king's son, and much it goeth against me; but Randver has altogether estranged away the love of Swanhild from thee, and has taken her to wife himself to thy great dishonouring.' So Jormunrek's anger burned fiercely against his son, and he sent out straightway and had him hanged to a tree. Then by the counselling of Bikki was Swanhild bound hand and foot and led forth to the gate of the burg; and they brought wild horses and drave them at her to tread her down. But Swanhild looked upon the horses, and they shrank back because of the bright shining of her eyes; neither durst they come near her till Bikki fetched a bag and drew it over her head; then the horses ran in and trampled her to death.

When Gudrun heard what had befallen, she went to her sons Hamdir and Saurli, saying, 'What do ye here, rejoicing and making merry all the day? Rise up and go and avenge your sister upon Jormunrek the king!' But they dallied about and had no heart for the enterprise. Then Gudrun gave them strong drink from out of big flagons, and furnished them with weapons, and with coats of mail so cunningly fashioned that steel would not bite thereon. So they set forth on their errand; but on the way meeting Erp their brother, they asked him, 'How wilt thou help us in this business?' And when he answered, 'As hand helps hand, and as foot helps foot,' they deemed lightly of his help, and turned on him, and slew him for a fool. Presently as they went their way both brothers stumbled, but Hamdir saved himself with his hand and Saurli with his foot. Wherefore they thought 'Such help as Erp had promised us was not to be despised.' Howbeit they journeyed till they came to King Jormunrek's hall, and they went in and fell upon him both together. Hamdir cut off the king's hands and Saurli his feet. Then said Hamdir, 'His head likewise might we have cut off were Erp our brother here.' But by this they had to turn

and fight with many warriors who ran in to slay them. Long they battled in the hall and smote down many a champion, till Jormunrek's folk waxed disheartened, because neither steel nor iron would bite upon their mail. Then came there into the hall a certain old man, one-eyed and austere to look upon, who said, 'Smite them with stones, so shall you bring these men to their end,' and passed out; neither wist any whither he went. So they took up stones and stoned Hamdir and Saurli that they died.

Now Gudrun when she knew of it, went into the forecourt of the palace, and sat musing how all her kindred, root and branch, were clean perished from off the face of the earth, and how she alone was left of all the Giukings. Heavily she called to mind the many things which she had suffered, and being tired of heart and very weary, she sorrowed not to feel death creep upon her. And at the last all the troubles of her latter days seemed blotted out, and her mind went back to Sigurd. She said, 'O Sigurd, remember the pledge thou madest me when we were man and wife together. Now from thy sombre dwelling-place among the dead come forth and look on me a-dying: lift me in thy shadowy arms and bear me tenderly to Hel's pale kingdom!' So the words of her mourning had an end.

High they reared the oak-pile, higher than any queen had heretofore: swift burned the fire and thawed her sorrow-bounden heart: black the smoke-clouds rolled and billowed all along the sky.

THE NIBELUNG STORY.

I. THE WEDDING OF THE QUEENS.

In a palace by the Rhine, at Worms in Burgundy, dwelt fair Kriemhild, the loftiest lady in all Rhineland. Her brothers were three mighty men who knew how to guard her well; Gunther and Gernot well proven in fight, and young Giselher lithe as a sapling tree. As for the liegemen whom they ruled, no king of any country had men like their uncle Hagan and his brother Dankwart, Ortwine of Metz, Volker, Rumold and Hunold, and many more such champions.

With a strong hand reigned the brothers. They kept a sumptuous court, laughing all ill to scorn; they ate, they drank, they fought in sport for lack of foes; their enemies feared them, and their people abode in peace.

One night there came a dream to the lady Kriemhild as she lay sleeping in her beautiful palace. She dreamed that she had taken a young falcon and nourished it for a long season till it grew very dear to her, when suddenly two eagles darted down and tare it to pieces before her eyes. Weeping she awoke, and coming to her mother, Uta, told her dream. Her mother said, 'I read it thou wilt take a mate, and sorrow shall come of it. God's pity, child, on the man on whom thou settest thy mind!' Kriemhild answered, 'If that be all, fear nothing, mother, for I will never wed; so none shall suffer ill for me.' 'Aye child,'

said her mother, 'tis well enough to talk, but wedlock hath many pleasures, and we weary of a lonely life. And then, how fair thou art! God send thee a proper mate, my daughter, and thou wilt forget thy dreams.' 'Peace, mother. Pain evermore dogs pleasure's steps. I will have neither pain nor pleasure. I will live and die a maid, and so cheat sorrow.' Thus for a long while Kriemhild remained heart-whole in the palace, gay and frank of speech with all men, but favouring none.

Away in the Netherland, in a castle called Xanten, on the Rhine-side, lived the young prince Siegfried, a stainless youth, so comely he was dear to all maidens, and so strong he was the pride of all men. One midsummer his father, King Siegmund, made him knight, and held high mass and royal festival with a seven days' feast in honour of his dubbing. How willingly the noblest maidens plied the needle to broider jewelled vestments for him to put on that day! How many hundred noble knights came up to tourney at the feast! What a glad woman was his mother, Queen Sieglind, when she saw her boy bear down the doughtiest of them, and bravely win his knighthood!

The feast being over, Siegfried set forth upon his travels, and wandered through many lands, winning everywhere great renown. Once as he journeyed he came to a hill-side where the fierce Nibelung and his brother Schilbung disputed as they counted a great treasure heap in front of a cave. These two brothers offered him their father's great sword Balmung, if he would divide the treasure between them. So Siegfried set to work at the task. But never was seen so great treasure: of precious stones there were at least a hundred waggon loads, and of red gold very much more. Siegfried began patiently to reckon up the gems and golden ornaments, but as weeks went by he began to find that his lifetime would not suffice to count so great riches. Then, angry at the delay, both brothers set on him with all their band; but

Siegfried, gripping the sword Balmung, slew them both and put their men to flight. And after that he slew twelve of the Nibelungers' champions and seven hundred of their chiefs. Then waged he battle with the mighty dwarf Alberich, and overcame him, and took from him his cloud-cloak; and he assembled all the Nibelungers and made them carry the treasure back into the cave again; and Alberich made he keeper of the treasure. So he won the countless hoard of gems and gold and the sword Balmung, and won the Nibelung land. Afterwards he slew a poison-spitting dragon, and bathed in the blood, whereby his skin being turned to horn no weapon would harm him.

When Siegfried came home again he heard folk talk of Kriemhild of Burgundy, how beautiful she was, yet so coy withal that she would listen to no man's wooing; and without heeding his father's warnings he chose eleven comrades, and, having clad them in the richest armour there was in the palace, took his journey to Worms, determined to win this damsel for his wife.

King Gunther and his uncle Hagan from the palace window saw them coming, and knew him for the famous man whose deeds were talked of far and wide. Wherefore when they rode into the hall the king received them courteously; and Siegfried and his comrades bowed themselves before King Gunther. And Gunther spake, saying, 'Siegfried is welcome here; yet still we marvel what he would seek at Worms upon the Rhine.'

He answered: 'It is not my wont to hide a matter. Men told me that you have strong champions in Burgundy, and I am come to see. They say that you, King Gunther, are a man strong in fight. I too am a warrior; and, like you, have land and treasure in abundance. I shall rule my father's kingdom; and when I sit upon his throne I would have the people say of me, "He has nobly won us lands and liegemen." Wherefore, hear my purpose; I care not

if you take it well or ill. I come to see whether of us twain is the stronger; I come to win your castles and your land and all that you possess, and to have you for my vassal.'

The king could hardly speak for anger, and the champions about him murmured loud.

Siegfried said: 'If you cannot keep your kingdom against all comers, let me rule it, for I can. But if you will fight, let your broad lands and mine be thrown into the scale, and whoso overcometh, let him be master over all.'

Then spake Gernot: 'Our lands are broad enough for us; we need no more. We are not for seizing a neighbour's land; being rightful masters of our own we are content.'

Grimly strode forward the burly Ortwine, Knight of Metz, saying, 'Who is this man that defieth the king?'

Then answered Siegfried: 'Who is he? A king. A mere king's man art thou: go, bring a dozen of thy fellows if thou wouldest fight with me.'

Thereon Ortwine called aloud for some to bring his weapons; but Gernot said, 'Peace: the man is a stranger and a guest; it may be we shall yet make friends with him. Small honour would be gained, good sooth, to slay a guest.' In like manner went Gernot to the other warriors, and forbade them to answer Siegfried's defiance, or take offence; and so stayed the broil.

Then King Gunther led Siegfried to the banquet-table, and when the wine was poured said, 'All that is ours is at your friendly service whenever in honour you choose to claim it.' And Siegfried being thereby appeased in mood, sat down to the feast, and afterwards joined the three brothers and their warriors in knightly sports. But whatsoever the pastime, whether hurling the stone, or flinging spear, or combat with the sword, there was none that could approach him. Fair Kriemhild, looking from

her window, beheld a man of nobler presence and handsomer countenance than she had ever seen; saw him foremost in all the games; watched him overcome her brothers and the strong champions of her land; and her eyes were never satisfied with beholding him.

Siegfried remained a long while at Gunther's court, yet caught never so much as a glimpse of the fair maiden on whom his heart was set. Then came tidings how Ludeger the Saxon and Ludegast King of Denmark had leagued together to come up against Burgundy with forty thousand men. And while Gunther and his brothers were ill at ease because of the tidings, Siegfried said, 'Leave me to deal with them. Stay you at home and frolic at your ease. I will take my eleven comrades, and a thousand of your men, and will go and meet these kings. Take you no further thought about the business.'

So Siegfried went forth as he had said, with his comrades and only a thousand men; Hagan and Ortwine, Dankwart, Sindold and Volker going also with him. In Saxony they met the host, and right well Siegfried proved his manhood, while all the champions of King Gunther marvelled at his deeds. They utterly routed their enemies and lost but sixty men. They took Ludeger and Ludegast alive, and brought them home with five hundred captives to the city of Worms. Then all the maidens flocked to hear, each what her knight had done in battle; only Kriemhild durst not come forth, but lovelorn abode in her bower and longed to know. Stealthily she sent for a youth who had seen the fight, and lightly asked him, 'I would know how the battle went, and how my brother Gernot fought, and if Hagan and Dankwart were brave.' He answered, 'There was not a coward in the fight; Gernot did well, and so did Hagan and Dankwart and Ortwine; but what were they, with all their prowess, to the Netherlandish knight! The

like was never seen. Alone, he brake the Saxon ranks, and with his own hand smote down Ludeger and took Ludegast prisoner. No mass of men could hem him in. Ask Ortwine or Hagan; all say the victory was Siegfried's. There is no man like Siegfried in all our host.' Then Kriemhild's glad cheek blushed rosy red at hearing Siegfried's praise, and she said to the youth, 'Take these ten marks of gold and a broidered vesture for thy pains.' He, wondering, went his way, while Kriemhild fed her mind with thinking on Siegfried's deeds.

Weeks wore on, yet Siegfried saw her not; till weary of waiting and yet too proud to speak his wish, he thought to go back to Netherland. But it fell out that Gunther asked Ortwine how he should make the Whitsun feast more famous in honour of their victory, and Ortwine answered, 'What more ennobles chivalry than for knights to have fair maidens' eyes upon them at the tourney or the feast? Wherefore bid the lady Uta, and your sister Kriemhild and all fair dames and damsels, be there.' Therefore came Kriemhild forth from her bower walking to court in royal state, a hundred knights and a hundred damsels at her side. Fair as the morning when the sun makes clouds to blush and quenches all the stars, so Siegfried saw her, and looking, saw not her queenly raiment nor the sparkle of her jewels for the glory of her radiant face. Then gazing yet, he feared before her beauty and her royalness, and mused, 'How could I dare have thought to woo her.' So he stood stock-still, glowing white and red by turns, while spite of all his fear, his heart said, 'Give her up? Nay; rather die.'

Gernot came to his brother Gunther and said, 'Brother, by way of requiting Siegfried for what he has done for us, bid him come and be greeted by Kriemhild before all the people. To be greeted of her, who never yet greeted knight, will make this peerless warrior wholly ours.' And Gunther, thinking it would prove greatly to the

profit of their kingdom, sent the noblest of his kinsmen to bid Siegfried to the court.

Glad was Siegfried, and he made haste and came to the court and stood before Kriemhild,—his face all aglow, his cheeks hot as fire beneath her love-bright eyes whereon he dared not look. Then Kriemhild softly said, 'Sir Siegfried, you are welcome—good and noble knight.' Thereon he raised his eyes, and as he looked in hers and she in his, both learned in silence all that either longed to know. Then as her brothers charged her, Kriemhild stooped from her high seat and kissed the knight in presence of all the people. Proudly Sir Siegfried lifted up his head, well paid for all his pains; while she sat blushing, but with pride alone, well knowing she had greeted the manliest man in all the court.

Then were the folk charged to make way for Kriemhild to go to the minster. But all the while the mass was singing Sir Siegfried chafed impatient of the song—and she the same—till after mass he came and stood beside her at the altar. Then Kriemhild took his hand, saying, 'God reward you, brave knight, for what you have done for Rhineland; for all men speak of your fame and worship as it well deserves in my esteem.' He, love-bewildered, looked into her eyes and answered, 'Dear lady Kriemhild, I will ever serve your brethren to my best, both day and night for your sweet sake.'

All twelve days of the feast it was awarded to Siegfried to walk with Kriemhild and her train each day from her palace to the court. And when the feast was over they ransomed King Ludeger and King Ludegast at the price of five hundred mules' weight of gold, and made a covenant with them not to make war again on Burgundy, and sent them away. Then one by one the warriors took their leave to journey home; and Siegfried, sore against his will, ordered forth his steeds to go back to Netherland. But young Giselher won him to remain, saying, 'Tarry

on with us; we have noble warriors and fair maidens for your company; and for our friendship's sake I do constrain you.' So Siegfried ordered back the horses and lingered on. What wonder, since he saw fair Kriemhild every day.

Now there lived in Issland beyond the sea a certain war-maiden, Queen Brynhild, who was not only very beautiful but so strong that she could hurl the spear and throw the stone further than any knight. And it was noised abroad that she would only wed the man that conquered her at three warlike games; but whoso tried and failed should suffer death for penalty. Thus many sought to win her heart and lost their heads, yet murmured not since death came from a hand so fair. And when Gunther would take a wife to be queen over Rhineland, he became love-struck at hearing the fame of Brynhild, and nothing would do but he must go and strive to win her. And Siegfried, when he knew it, spake to Gunther, saying, 'Go not. I tell you it is in vain. I know this terrible battle-maiden; four men could not withstand her furious strength.' Yet would not Gunther be persuaded, but said, 'Unless I win her, my good days are past. I can but die if she should vanquish me, and if I have her not I would not live. Only help me in this enterprise and I will hold nothing too dear for thy reward.' Siegfried answered, 'Give me Kriemhild thy sister for my wife, and I will help thee, and will bring this thing to pass.' And Gunther made a covenant with him, saying, 'I will surely give thee my sister on the day that Brynhild cometh into Rhineland.' Then they took counsel concerning the manner of their going. Gunther was for taking a great army across the sea, but Siegfried said, 'That would not avail against this mighty queen; her warriors are many; and the contest is with her alone. We will travel thither with only Sir Hagan and Sir Dankwart for company. Trust me, no thousand

champions will care to fight us four. And since in Brynhild's land the warriors are most sumptuously arrayed, we will put on the fairest apparel that can be got, so we be not put to shame before her lieges.' For seven weeks Kriemhild and her maidens wrought precious vestments for the warriors, three changes for every day; rich garments of silk, trimmed with ermine and skins of birds and fish from distant lands, and sewn with precious stones and golden thread. And when the work was done and the warriors had arrayed themselves, Kriemhild gave her brother into Siegfried's charge, saying, 'I pray thee see no harm befall him from fierce Brynhild's hand;' and this he promised her. Then went they down to the ship, and Siegfried took the helm and steered along the Rhine. On the twelfth morning they saw a mighty fortress on a rock, and fair broad lands with castles all along the coast; and Siegfried said, 'That is Brynhild's fortress, Isenstein; those are her lands and castles.' Then charged he his companions that they should say when they landed, 'Gunther is master, Siegfried is but his man.'

They came ashore and saw a three-fold palace with more than fourscore turrets. The castle gates flew open and the warders took from each man his horse and shield. Then the chamberlain required them to lay aside their weapons; and when Hagan would not at first, Siegfried told him it was the usage of the maiden's court; so, grumbling he obeyed.

Queen Brynhild sat in a fair wide hall of pure green marble, her maidens round her. One came and told her of the guests; she asked who they were; he answered, 'I know them not, save only that one is like Siegfried of the Netherland.' Then said Brynhild, 'Bring hither my armour, for great as is Siegfried's renown I fear him not so deeply as to yield to be his wife.' And Brynhild girt on her golden breastplate and an Indian silk surcoat which no steel could cut, and coming forth from her hall

at the head of five hundred chosen warriors, drew near to Siegfried, saying, 'Welcome brave warrior; tell me now thine errand.'

Siegfried answered, 'Pardon, fair lady, but thy greeting befitteth rather my master, King Gunther, who for love of thee comes hither from Rhineland, and will never return, so he has sworn, till he can take thee with him as his bride. I am but his man.'

Then said Brynhild, 'If he be thy master and thou art but his man, let him now play with me at three war-games. If he conquer me in all I will not scorn to be his wife, but if he fail in one, master and men shall die. He must cast the stone with me, and leap with me, and fling the javelin.'

Then Siegfried whispered to Gunther, 'Fear not, for I will hold you harmless.' So Gunther answered her, 'Fair Brynhild, for your beauty's sake willingly shall I dare the contest and the penalty.'

A ring was marked. Seven hundred harnessed champions gathered round to see the fray. Meanwhile Sir Siegfried hasted to the ship, and from a secret corner there drew forth the cloud-cloak which he won from the dwarf Alberich, keeper of the Nibelungs' treasure, and put it on:—such was the virtue of the cloak that it gave its wearer the strength of twelve strong men, yet hid him like a cloud from all men's gaze.

To the ring came Brynhild, gold spangles glittering on her silken surcoat; and, rising and falling with her eager breath, the silken vesture gave glimpses of her snowy skin. Four servants staggered bearing her huge golden shield, steel-studded, three spans thick; its thong a leathern band, grass-green with emeralds. Three men scarce bore along the javelin which she used to fling; its point three weights of iron welded into one, and sharpened deadly keen. Twelve brawny knights panted beneath

the load of the great round stone which she hurled; and when they let it down it shook the solid ground.

Then said Dankwart, 'Better we had stayed at home, where once we passed for warriors, than die disgraced before a woman without a struggle for it.'

'Woman! good lack,' cried Hagan—'a bride for a fiend. One thing is certain; were I Gunther I could deem it sweeter to sleep the sword-sleep at her hand than lie with such a darling at my side. Yet, had we our arms and harness on our backs to help our king, methinks we might abase this maiden's pride.'

Brynhild heard his words, and looking over her shoulder, answered in scorn, 'Go get them; I will deny nothing to my guests. Your puny help will succour him perchance as much as it will trouble me.' So they armed themselves and stood beside Gunther. Brynhild at the far end of the ring, her snow white arms all bare, was poising the spear in hand. Straightway Siegfried in his cloud-cloak came up unseen, and touched Gunther on the hand. The king looked round but saw no man. He said, 'Who touched me?' Siegfried answered, 'Hist! It is I, Siegfried, thy friend. Quick; unsling thy buckler; give it me to bear. Do as I bid thee. Make thou the gestures; leave me the contest.'

With all her might the strong maid flung the massy spear. It crashed into the buckler, yet Siegfried's hand which bare it shook not, though the two men staggered with the blow. Then whilst Gunther made as though he would pull out the spear from the shield, Siegfried, unseen in his cloud-cloak, plucked it forth and hurled it butt-end foremost at the maid again, for he thought it were a shame to send the point against so fair a damsel. Yet even so, the javelin fastened quivering in Brynhild's shield; and with the mighty shock she tottered to and fro and fell upon the plain. Quick she upstarted, crying, 'I

thank thee, Gunther, for that stroke.' For in truth she deemed it was his work.

Angrily she heaved up the great stone and brandished it about her head, then flung it twelve fathoms away, and leaping, sprang beyond the stone-cast. Gunther ran to where the stone lay, and seized it. Men thought that he flung it, not seeing Siegfried grip the rock in his hands and hurl it half as far again as Brynhild. Then Siegfried caught the king about the waist and bounded with him to where the stone pitched. All men saw the leap; but there was no one against the stone save Gunther only.

Sullenly queen Brynhild called her warriors. 'Come hither, men and kinsmen: I am no more your mistress; bow low to Gunther, you are his liegemen now.' Then made they all obeisance to King Gunther and owned him as their lord. But Siegfried hasted away to the ship to take off his cloud-cloak; and when he came back, finding Gunther and his companions in the palace, he said, 'Why tarrieth the king from the games? Come let us to the ring and see the contest.'

Brynhild answered, 'Where hast thou been, good Siegfried, not to know that the games are done and King Gunther has overmastered me?' Then said Siegfried, 'I was busy in the ship the while; but truly I am glad to know my master has taught so proud a maiden submission.'

Some days went by while Brynhild made ready for her journey to the Rhineland. She sent to gather all her friends and liegemen to Isenstein, to receive gifts of gold and rich raiment; and as Hagan beheld how great companies flocked early and late to the castle, his mind misgave him of some treachery, and he spake with Siegfried thereupon. Siegfried said, 'Fear not. I am going a journey alone; ask not where or why, but tarry here for me.'

Then went Siegfried down to the sea-shore and put his

cloud-cloak on, and entering a little boat which he found tied there, put out to sea. Men marked the boat as it bounded over the waves, but could perceive neither oarsman nor steersman, and they marvelled, thinking that it was driven by a storm. All night and day Siegfried rowed until he reached a coast where was a meadow and a castle on a hill. He tied the boat, went straightway to the castle and beat upon the gate. A huge earth-shaking giant, the porter at the gate, yawning as he woke, cried gruffly, 'Who knocks so loud?'

Siegfried answered, 'A warrior who is loth to wait till lazy louts have done their snores. Open the gate.' The giant seized a heavy iron bar, and taking his ponderous shield in hand, flung wide the doors. Then followed so fierce a fight that the sound of the blows reached the hall of the Nibelungers. Alberich the dwarf heard it in his hollow hill, and straightway came hasting to the place, but found Siegfried conqueror and the giant lying bound upon the earth. The dwarf had a golden scourge made of seven heavy knobs of gold which swung from a handle by seven thongs. With this he beat Siegfried's shield to splinters; but still the knight of Netherland disdained to draw his sword upon his chamberlain. He flung his broken shield away, and taking the hoary dwarf by the beard shook him to and fro till he roared with pain. 'Hold, master,' cried Alberich, 'for pity's sake let go. I will do all your bidding; but—what is your name, kind sir?' He answered, 'My name is Siegfried; you have heard it I think before to-day.' The dwarf said, 'Well-a-way! So Siegfried is it? To think I should not know my master! Let me go—what must I do?'

'Go straight and summon a thousand Nibelungers; equip them well, and bring them with all speed to Issland to Queen Brynhild's castle.' Siegfried let him go, and the dwarf fared blithely on his errand.

Queen Brynhild looked out from her castle, and seeing many white-sailed ships coming to land, she said to Gunther, 'What are these?' Gunther answered, 'They are guests of mine who come to greet these guests of thine.' And when Brynhild found Siegfried among them, she welcomed them all to land.

Then said the queen, 'Will someone give away my gifts of gold and silver to the guests? It is no unthankful office, since I have wealth enough in store.'

Dankwart said, 'Give me the keys, fair queen. Trust me I will so distribute it that all shall be content.'

But no sooner had Dankwart taken the keys than he scattered gold and silver right and left to all that came; the very beggars in the street he clad in courtly raiment, and to him that asked a mark he gave enough to make him rich for life. Never had queen so lavish a treasurer before. And when Brynhild spake to Gunther to stop this wasting of her wealth, Hagan said, 'Never fear, great queen, the king of Rhineland hath treasure in such plenty that we may well afford to squander thine.' Nevertheless, Brynhild was fain to save twenty chests of her vestments and jewels, and these she would not trust either with Dankwart or Hagan. Then with a hundred maidens in her train, a thousand of her chosen warriors, and the thousand Nibelunger knights, Brynhild and Gunther set out for Rhineland.

A royal greeting Queen Uta prepared for her son's fair bride. With all her knights and damsels in her train she rode to the beach to welcome her. And when Brynhild was come forth from the ship, Kriemhild came down from her palfrey and ran and took her hands and kissed her, saying, 'Welcome, dear sister Brynhild.' Hard would it be to say whether of the two maidens was the more beautiful, she of Issland or she of Rhineland.

Then King Gunther prepared a royal feast, and spread silken pavilions in the plain before the city, and held

justs and games. And at the end of the tournament came Siegfried to the king, and brought to his mind the promise he had made. Gunther said, 'What I have vowed that will I now perform.' Then sent he to summon Kriemhild to the hall. And the king spake to his kinsmen and to them which sat at table with him, 'Think you that Siegfried is a worthy man to wed my sister?' They all answered, 'He is worthy.' So when Kriemhild was come he said to her, 'Sister, I pray thee of thy kindness to set me free from an oath which I have made; for I have vowed thee in marriage to a knight.'

She answered, 'Dear brother, I will do thy will, and take for husband him thou givest me.'

Then Gunther brought Siegfried to her, saying, 'This is the knight whereof I spake. Wilt thou take him for thy husband?'

Kriemhild blushed, looked gladly in Siegfried's face, and laid her snow-white hands in his—he, naught ashamed, put his strong arms round her and kissed his bride before them all.

Now at the feast, when Brynhild sat by Gunther, she espied how Kriemhild sat by Siegfried, and being very angry said to the king, 'I cannot rest to see your sister sitting content at a thrall's side. Bid her come and sit by us—not mingle with thy men.'

He answered, 'Peace. We will talk of this another time. I have given her to wife to Siegfried for an oath's sake. Ask not why; what is done is done.'

'His wife? Thy sister given to thy man? Until I know why thou hast done this thing, thy queen I may be, but thy wife I will not be.'

Gunther said, 'Know then, Siegfried is not my man. He is a very great king, with broad lands and castles of his own. Let that suffice thee.'

But Brynhild pondered this within her mind and could not rest content. If Siegfried were so great a king, why

served he Gunther? Or if he were but Gunther's man, wherefore should Gunther give him his sister?

Night came, and the royal chamberlains, with trains of youths and maidens, led brides and bridegrooms to the wedding chambers. But no sooner was Brynhild alone with Gunther, than she turned fiercely on him and refused to be his wife till he should tell what service Siegfried had done that he must needs give him Kriemhild, and what oath that was whereof he spake. Idle were Gunther's loving words. He dared not tell her what she asked; she would not suffer his caresses, but in fury flung him half across the room, then kneeled upon his chest, and with the girdle from her waist bound her new bridegroom hand and foot, and hung him to a nail, and let him dangle there till daylight, whilst she lay down and slept alone upon the marriage-bed. At morning she untied him, lest the servants bringing the gay marriage-robes should see his shame, and both be sport for babbling tongues. All day King Gunther was a moody man amidst a merry-making court. At last he came to Siegfried, who for the very fulness of his joy cared not to join the noisy crowd but mused apart, and told what had befallen him. 'Look at my wrists and ankles swollen with those cursed cords; her fingers are like iron; her clutch is like some dragon's. What can I do? I love her, terrible as she is.' Siegfried answered, 'Leave all to me. I will tame this fury for thee. To-night, wrapped in my cloud-cloak, I will hie me to thy chamber. Watch thou, and trust thine honour in my hands.'

So when night came, Siegfried put on his cloud-cloak and went with Gunther into Brynhild's chamber. He put out the tapers; then mimicking the voice of Gunther, he spake to Brynhild and lay down at her side. 'Hast thou forgotten yesternight?' she said; and took up Siegfried like a child in her strong arms, and hurled him with his head against an oaken bench. He started

up and wrestled with the mighty maiden. They hurtled to and fro in savage fight, now here, now there about the room, while Gunther had to dodge on tiptoe in the dark from place to place lest Brynhild should light on him and find that the man with whom she struggled was not her mate. Brynhild gripped Siegfried round the arms, and by main force lifted him off his feet, and jammed him up against a press that stood by the bedside. Then, whilst with her shoulder she fixed him there, she clutched his two hands in one of hers so tight that the blood gushed from his finger-tips, the while with her other hand she sought to loose her girdle wherewith to bind him. Siegfried put forth his strength, and after a great struggle freed his hands, and gat his feet again; then closing with the fierce woman he threw her headlong backwards on the floor. Heavily she fell, half-stunned, quite helpless, wholly conquered. She said, 'No more will I provoke thy strength. Henceforth, King Gunther, I will be thy docile wife.' Siegfried softly arose and left the chamber; but bore away two trophies with him—he had slipped Brynhild's ring from off her finger, and drawn the loosened girdle from her waist. And these, whether in wilfulness or sport, he gave to his wife. Kriemhild took the ring and girdle, but for a long time wist not whence they came.

On the morrow Gunther and his queen sat blithely at the wedding feast, as happy a pair as might be; and from that morning Brynhild lost all her marvellous strength and became weak as any other woman.

Soon after this Siegfried took his wife home to Netherland. And when he came to Xanten, Siegmund his father lifted the crown from off his head and made Siegfried king. So Siegfried remained there to rule that country, and held besides all the land of the Nibelungers in fee. As time went on Kriemhild bore him a son, whose name they called Gunther for his uncle's sake, and about the same season Brynhild bare a son to King Gunther, and they called his name Siegfried.

II. THE CROSSLET ON THE VESTURE.

Now Brynhild continually pondered in her mind why Siegfried came not to do homage for his lands. And she often spake to her lord, saying, 'This Siegfried, since he is thy man, how comes it that he does thee no service, pays no tribute, yields no homage?' After a while, King Gunther, being wearied at her asking, promised to bring Siegfried and his wife to Worms. And since he could not command them to obey, he sent messengers to seek their presence, for friendship's sake, at a great festival which he would hold at midsummer.

When the messengers told Siegfried their errand, he promised that he would come, and having loaded them with presents and given them gold treasure as much as their horses could carry, sent them back again to King Gunther.

At midsummer Siegfried came to Worms, bringing with him fair Kriemhild and Siegmund his father, and a great company of his warriors, but his child he left at home in Netherland. Gunther and his queen received them as befitted royal folk, and day by day held tournaments in their honour. But still queen Brynhild could not rest from her desire to know why Siegfried paid no homage, notwithstanding Siegfried had himself told her that he was Gunther's man. And one evening as Brynhild viewed the justs, Kriemhild, sitting beside her, said, 'Look at my husband, how strong and brave he is! Where is the man that can compare with him in aught? Am I not right to be proud that he is mine—the most peerless knight in all the world!'

Brynhild answered, 'Aye, thou mayest be proud of him when Gunther is not by. But howsoever strong is Siegfried so much the prouder I; for I have wedded his master. Nay, deny it not. I had it from his lips as well as

Gunther's. For when my lord subdued me in the fight Siegfried himself told me, "Gunther is master, I am but his man." Nay, blush not for Siegfried, he is a better thrall than most; a good vassal to his lord.'

'Master? Lord? Siegfried hath none,' cried Kriemhild angrily.

'He is our thrall,' answered Brynhild; 'and all that hold of him are our thralls likewise.'

Kriemhild answered, 'Indeed! And since thou rulest us all, how cometh it to pass that we pay thee no homage and always deny thee service? Nay, I will endure thy taunts no longer. Hold thy peace.'

Then said Brynhild, 'It becometh not a thrall's wife to bear herself too loftily. So since thou wilt be humbled, we will see to whether of us twain shall be paid the greater respect—to thee the vassal's wife, or to me his lord's.'

Kriemhild said, 'Be it so. I will prove this night that I dare enter the minster with all my train before Gunther's queen.'

Then flashing with anger both women left the lists, and each went and put on her most costly raiment and richest jewels to outdo the other. Brynhild looked up the very finest Arabian stuffs from her chest wherewith to deck herself. Kriemhild clothed her maidens more sumptuously than any women yet were clad in Burgundy; but she herself put on apparel stiff with jewels, worth the robes of thirty queens, and all to anger Brynhild. Men thought it strange to see the queens walking to the minster apart, their trains wide-sundered, when hitherto they had gone side by side.

To the minster door came Brynhild, panting with anger scarce controlled, and cried, 'Stay, vassaless; make way for the lady of the land!'

Kriemhild's blood was up, and she answered, 'Vassaless good sooth! And how much loftier is a vassal's wanton than his wife? When Gunther could not win nor tame

thee, my husband Siegfried did the work. Thou dishonoured thing, abase thyself and let me pass.' Tears started out from Brynhild's eyes for rage and shame. And whilst she wept, and cried 'It is false, vile woman; Gunther shall know of this,' Kriemhild spurned her away, and with her train passed through the minster door.

All through the service Brynhild sat with a weight like lead upon her mind; she thought that chant and psalm would never come to an end. But when at last it was over, she hasted forth and stopped Kriemhild outside the church door, whilst knights and ladies gathered round to hear.

She said, 'You shall go no further. Stop and do me right. You called me wanton. Prove it.'

Kriemhild answered, 'Better ask me to be silent. Remember Siegfried is but a lowly lover—a vassal. But if you will have your shame made plain before the crowd I care not. See this ring upon my hand. Siegfried brought it to me from your chamber.'

'It's a foul lie,' said Brynhild. 'Many a year I missed the ring, and now I know the thief.'

Kriemhild said, 'Thief? Why will you not hold your peace and hide your shame? I am no thief. Behold your girdle which I wear about my waist. That Siegfried brought me likewise.'

Brynhild looked and saw that it was her girdle. Well she knew it; made of Nineveh silk glittering with precious stones. Then breaking out in a passion of tears, she said, 'Go some one; fetch King Gunther hither. He shall know what his sister says of me.'

When Gunther came and saw his queen weeping bitterly, he took her tenderly to him and asked what had befallen her.

She answered, 'Thy sister would rob me of my good name—she says that Siegfried has boasted of my love. And see, she wears my girdle and my ring to put me to an open shame.' King Gunther said, 'If Siegfried has so boasted he shall deny it, or one of us shall die.' And

he bade them send for him. Presently came Siegfried, knowing nothing of what had happened, and wondering to see the anger of the queens. Gunther told why Brynhild wept; then asked him, 'Sir Siegfried, is it true that thou hast won Queen Brynhild's love? And hast thou boasted so?'

Siegfried answered frankly, 'It is not true, nor have I boasted so; nor spake I at any time such words to my wife.' Thereto he uplifted his hand and sware before all the men of Burgundy. And he said, 'Sore it grieveth me that my wife should have set thine at naught. But we must teach our women to leave off idle talking and to rule their tongues. Keep thou thy wife in order; I'll do the same by mine.'

Then was King Gunther pacified, and said, 'It is enough. I heartily believe thee free from blame in this matter.' But Hagan and Ortwine of Metz were very angry and would never believe but Siegfried, in some boastful fit, had foully slandered their queen, and that what his wife spake she heard from him. Wherefore Hagan continually stirred up the king against Siegfried in secret, prompting him ever to spill his blood, and saying, 'If he is guiltless how came he with the ring and the girdle? So long as Siegfried lives our queen's good name will be bandied about by every prating tongue.' For a long time Gunther heeded him not, or only answered, 'Siegfried was ever true to us in word and deed;' but as Hagan and Ortwine harped all day upon the wrong done to the queen, showing besides how Gunther might become king both of the Netherland and the Nibelung men if Siegfried were destroyed, and as Brynhild would not let him rest at night for urging the same thing, he began to hearken. Yet said he, 'Siegfried is so strong of hand that it would be vain for any of us to take this quarrel up.' Hagan answered, 'Fear not but I will compass his death either by strength or subtlety.

Only give me leave.' So he persuaded Gunther to get strange messengers to ride as though from Ludeger and Ludegast to defy the Burgundians to battle; and to see what would come of it.

Accordingly one morning, as Hagan had arranged, there came two-and-thirty messengers to the king. And Siegfried, seeing them, said to Gunther, 'Who are these men? And what meaneth this whispering in the court betwixt you and Hagan and Ortwine?' The king said, 'Good cause have I for sorrow, since Ludeger and Ludegast threaten to come and ravage all my land again.' 'If that is all,' laughed Siegfried, 'be of good cheer. Stay you at home with your warriors at the hearth side. I and my knights will now go forth and bow these men beneath your yoke again; and people shall say, "King Gunther had in Siegfried a better friend for friendship's sake than liege had ever vassal that did homage for land or fee."'

Siegfried made no delay but gat his arms and harness, and gathered his men together. Then went the wily Hagan to take leave of his cousin Kriemhild. And Kriemhild said to him, 'Is not mine a brave lord, that can give so strong a succour to his friends! I am glad this has befallen so, for now my husband will make amends for all my folly and my wrong to Brynhild. Perchance she will forgive me then,—when Siegfried for my sake has slain her foes and comes home conqueror. It was my fault, not his. But that you know; for Siegfried said so. You heard him before all the people. He could not lie—not even to shield me—and for his speaking truth and shaming me I love him better than if he had lied. I know not how I could have spoken thus and made such mischief with my tongue. I would not, only Brynhild galled me so.'

Hagan answered, 'Aye, aye; we all know that full well. But, lady, tell me, is there any service I might do

for Siegfried in the war? For in truth I love no man better than I love him.'

She said, 'O, I fear not that any man will slay my husband. I know his might and valour.'

'Aye, lady; so do both friends and foes. Yet he is but a mortal man; and since his life is very precious to us all it was my thought to watch by him through the fight, lest harm should befall him by any treachery or misadventure. We dare not lose him, lady.'

She answered, 'It is kind of thee, good Hagan; and since thou art my cousin I gladly trust him in thy keeping, and will tell thee a secret known to him and me alone. When Siegfried slew the dragon, you know how he bathed him in the hot blood and made his flesh sword-proof. Dear friend, no other creature knows what I am going to tell: I pray thee safely treasure it.—But as he bathed, there fell a leaf from off a linden tree and lay betwixt his shoulders, and that tiny place alone the blood washed not. There only steel may pierce my darling; often through the battle-time I tremble lest in the cloud of darts some one may find its way there and I lose the mate so dear to me. There guard him with thy shield, dear friend, and God and I will bless thee.'

Hagan said, 'I pray thee sew me a token in his outer garment, that I may surely know where most to guard him.' She told him, 'I will sew a little crosslet with fine silk upon his vesture. So shalt thou know. I charge thee keep him safe. Farewell.'

Afterward Hagan set off with Siegfried and the host. And as soon as they had journeyed a little way and Hagan had carefully espied the crosslet, he sent forward men to go away to a distance and return in guise of messengers from Ludeger and Ludegast to offer submission and beg for peace.

Fretting to be baulked of his war-play, Sir Siegfried turned his horse and brought the host back again. In

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the palace he found King Gunther who, being counselled by Hagan, said they would all go a-hunting in Odenwald. And Siegfried, grown restless at not having men to hunt, was glad to go and hunt the wild boar. But Gunther's brethren, Gernot and Giselher, knew the plot against Siegfried's life and either feared or were ashamed to go to the hunt; yet held they their peace and let him ride forth to his death unwarned.

But first Sir Siegfried went to bid farewell to Kriemhild. He took her sweet face betwixt his hands and lifted up her rosy mouth to his to kiss, saying, 'God bring me safe back to see these dear bright eyes again.' But Kriemhild's eyes grew dim because of an ill foreboding which scarce took shape within her mind. She thought on the secret she had told Hagan, yet dared not own it to her lord; so she only hid her head in his breast and sobbed. She said, 'Dear lord, go not a-hunting. I dreamed last night I saw thee chased by two wild swine across the heath, and the flowers in the track turned bloody red. My heart is chilled with fear of losing thee. O stay!' He answered, 'Foolish child, dry up thy tears. What cause have I for fear? Not a soul in Rhineland beareth me ill-will. I go with friends, not against enemies; for pastime, not for war. Be comforted; be blithe and merry with thy kinsmen, and, ere thou knowest, Siegfried will be at thy side again.'

She clung to him and twined her arms about his neck. 'Nay; go not, I pray thee. Leave me not. Last night I dreamed that mountains fell above my head and shut me out from thee for ever. My heart will break if thou dost go.'

Tenderly he unclasped the winding arms; thrice kissed her; and passed out. It seemed to Kriemhild that the sunshine went out too, for the gloom that fell on her.

No hunter surpassed Siegfried that day. The first beast that his lime-hound started was a half-bred boar; him Siegfried struck dead at a stroke. Then found he a

lion in a thicket and drew his bow and shot him through. He brought down a buffalo, an elk, four strong wild oxen, and many a swift hart and hind. A great wild boar ran furious at him, but Siegfried, scorning to harry the beast with spears, fought him with his sword Balmung instead, and slew him. He chased a bear, bound him with cords and brought him alive, tied at his saddle-bow, to where the cooks and scullions were making ready the hunters' meal at a great fire in the wood. A savoury smell of roast and boiled and dainty stews rose from the pots and pans about the pine-fire.

Then sat they all down right merrily to the feast. But Siegfried looked about and began to murmur, saying, 'There is truly no lack of meats of every kind, but where, good comrades, is the wine?'

Then said false Gunther, 'Hagan is to blame who makes us die of thirst.'

And Hagan said, 'I am indeed to blame. I thought the hunting of to-day was to be held in the woodpecker's haunt; thither by mishap I sent the wine. But yonder among the trees runneth a little brook; the water is bright and cold; there let him drink that is athirst.'

Now as Hagan had beforetime ordered it, only he and King Gunther rose up to go with Siegfried to the brook. And they made a race as though in sport, which should first reach the linden-tree that grew by the stream-side. But Siegfried far outstripped them both, and gained the tree, and leaned his spear and sword and buckler thereby; yet for all he was so parched, of his courtesy he would not quench his thirst till the king should first have drunk. And when the two came up, first Gunther stooped over the stream and took his draught, then rose and stepped aside. Afterward kneeled Siegfried down to drink. And while he drank, Hagan came softly and took the sword and bow from against the tree and hid them; then spied he for the sign on Siegfried's silken coat, and having

found it, seized the spear and drave it with a trembling, frightened hand, right through the crosslet betwixt Siegfried's shoulders. The life-blood spouted on his murderous fingers; he, white with terror, left the spear sticking there and fled.

Siegfried felt that he was death-stricken. He gat upon his feet; he looked round for his weapons, but neither bow nor sword was there. Only his shield remained. He caught it in his hand and ran, while every bound jagged the great boar-spear in his aching back. He ran at Hagan, and step by step gained on the man, till, having well-nigh overtaken him he stopped and hurled his great shield at the murderer. It smote the coward's buckler, shivered it in pieces and felled him to the ground, while all the wood resounded with the blow. Then Siegfried grieved because he had no sword wherewith to slay his enemy. But immediately he sickened with his wound; death-pallor came into his face; his strength was loosed; his sinews slackened; his eyes grew dim as though a cloud veiled them. Upon his face he fell along the grass, and stained the flowers with his blood.

Warriors from all sides came running up. They gathered about and lifted up his head. Siegfried, writhing in mortal anguish, upbraided his murderers with his dying breath. 'Foully have you done, O cowards, thus to repay the service of a faithful friend! Unwisely have you done, O fools; and you will rue it sore! Cursed be ye and all that henceforth from your loins shall spring. Alas, that I loved Gunther, saved his life, his honour, and his land, for this reward!'

The false king bowed his head and wept for shame.

'Nay, weep not,' Siegfried moaned; 'to plot a murder and then weep for it only maketh a man the more despised. But if thy black heart hath any pity left, I pray thee befriend my dear love and lady. She is thy sister; guard her, I pray, as king and brother should.

And that she may find favour in thy sight, remember all I did for thee—forget how thou rewardedst it.'

He spake no more. Awhile he lay seeming to fight with Death as with some ancient foe; then hid his face in the grass; a shuddering went through his limbs; then came a calm, and the faithful knight lay dead beneath the trees.

When Gunther's chiefs knew certainly that Siegfried was dead, they took him up and laid him on a golden buckler, and bare him forth from the wood. And every man that went hunting in Odenwald that day sware to keep Hagan's secret, and to abide by one tale—to wit, that Siegfried must needs go hunting alone, and they had come upon his body slain by robbers in the wood.

In the dark night Hagan and his men carried Siegfried's body and laid it down athwart the threshold of Kriemhild's door, and departed.

The matin bell, ringing before the dawn, waked Kriemhild and her maids, and straightway they arose to go to matins at the minster as they were wont. Her chamberlain stumbled on the body in the dusk, and not knowing who it was, ran in to tell his lady how a dead knight lay before her door.

Quick answered she, 'Tis he, my love, my Siegfried lies before my door!' She shrieked and fell, blood oozing from her pallid lips. Morning had come when she wakened from her swoon: her women hushed their whispers and their tears. She looked at their white faces and knew her fears were true. They, thankful not to have to tell her, dumbly led her through the door. They watched her lift the blood-bedabbled corpse within her lily arms; saw her, ere she stayed to kiss the leaden lips, go searching all about to find the wound, mute as a tigress seeking the hunter's death-mark on the body of her young. Then she lulled it in her arms and rained down tears upon the quiet face. She saw the crosslet

pierced, knew well the work was Hagan's, the bidding Brynhild's, and the folly hers.

The hoary Siegmund came, and, lifting up his voice, bewailed his only son, snatched from him in his age. The Nibelung men, and they of the Netherland, came crowding up, and fiercely talked in groups, till group by group they made one throng and cried out with one voice and mind, 'To the palace! Away with Gunther and his men! We will root them from the earth!' But Kriemhild spread forth her hands and besought them, saying, 'Waste not your lives for naught. They have thirty men for every one of you. God will avenge us; only wait. Let me find the man that slew my darling. If God forbear to smite him, I will not. But O not now, for I must weep. Be patient; weep with me awhile, good friends, and help me coffin my dear lord.'

All through the city knights and dames lamented the sad fate of Siegfried, wondering if he died by treachery or mishap. They gossipped on, and marvelled much; had many tales to tell and hear, but knew not aught. The men that hunted in Odenwald kept the secret as they sware to do.

They laid the dead man on a bier and bare him to the minster. They set the bier before the altar and sang a requiem. And when the mass was done King Gunther said, 'Alas, my sister, for the sorry mischance which hath bereaved thee.'

Kriemhild answered, 'If mischance it be, and thou and thy men are guiltless, fear not; but go, each of you—pass one by one before the bier; so shall the guilt of him who did this thing be plainly seen by all the people.'

Truly it is a great marvel, appointed of old to mark the shedder of blood, that whensoever the murderer approacheth a corpse the wounds break out a-bleeding. So it befell that when Hagan drew nigh to Siegfried's dead body the blood burst from the wound afresh, and ran

down off the bier about the altar stone. And seeing the sign, the people whispered and made room for Hagan till he stood apart. Then said Gunther, 'Let fools put faith in tokens and in signs. I give you all to know that Siegfried was slain by robbers. He died not by Hagan's hand.'

Kriemhild answered, 'Verily he died by robbers—robbers which fawned and licked his bounteous hand, then basely stole away the life he spent on them. God and good men avenge me on such shameful robbers as Hagan and Gunther who spilled my darling's blood!'

Many a mass was sung. The minster bells tolled all the day. They brought a heavy coffin braced with iron bands and decked about with gold and silver plates; therein they laid Sir Siegfried. Little children came from every city street bringing offerings for the dead. But Kriemhild in her sorrow could not bear to give up his dear body to the ground; and first she begged three days wherein to sit and weep in solitude with the dead; and when at last they bore him to the grave, she came and fell upon her knees before her brethren and them which stood by, beseeching them so pitifully to break the coffin open and let her see her lord once more, that they could not choose but grant her prayer.

When the days of mourning were accomplished, and thirty thousand marks had been divided amongst the poor for the good of Siegfried's soul, Siegmund spake to his daughter-in-law to go back with him to Netherland, and she being willing, they all made ready to depart. But Kriemhild's mother, Uta, prayed her to remain; and her brother Giselher entreated her not to leave her own kith and kin to go home and live amongst strangers, for that he would certainly watch over and comfort her, and make amends for her affliction. Gernot also begged her to stay, saying, 'Believe me, I had neither part nor plot in Siegfried's death; neither knew I before that any bare

him malice.' Kriemhild yielded to the pleadings of her brothers and remained. Siegmund tried hard to turn her mind by speaking of her child at home, but to no purpose, since Siegfried's body lay in Burgundy. Then finding he could not prevail on her, Siegmund, very loth, bade Kriemhild farewell, and gathering together his knights, departed out of Rhineland.

For three years and more Kriemhild went away from the palace, and dwelt apart with her maids in a house hard by the minster gate. Each morning and evening she betook herself to church, and was fain to linger there, or weep on Siegfried's tomb. Her sorrow fastened on her mind. Peace never came from prayer or chant or psalm; only a sorrow-weariness and listlessness of heart. The people, seeing her sweet face, white and grief-worn, pitied her, and those about were very tender for their pity's sake. Only Queen Brynhild cared nothing for Kriemhild's tears; wept never with her, comforted her not; but sat on high upon her throne and scoffed at her. All those three years and a half Kriemhild would never so much as set eyes on Gunther or on Hagan.

At last Hagan spake to King Gunther, 'Except you make the peace with your sister Kriemhild, where is the profit of what we have done? Without it we shall never get the Nibelung treasure.' Gunther answered, 'It is idle talking. She will not see or speak to me. And if I tried to break in on her sorrow, she would but call me robber to my face again, and make as much ado at being ravished of her grief as when we robbed her of her love. I dare not go. If you are bolder, go yourself.' But having taken counsel together, they sent Gernot and Giselher; and these coming to Kriemhild said, 'Dear sister, life is too short to grieve so long; and sorrow for the dead availeth naught except it chasten us to tenderness. King Gunther longs to give you proof that he slew not

Siegfried. Be reconciled to him.' She answered, 'Verily Gunther slew him not. Nay, brothers, it was I. I am to blame. I who betrayed him—not the poor cowards which thrust the spear into his back, ran from him when he was dying, shrank from him when he was dead. Hagan, not Gunther, struck the blow, but only since Gunther was the greater coward. If I should pardon Gunther it would be because my heart despised him yet more than Hagan, and most because I blame my folly worst of all.'

They pleaded long, until from weariness she said, 'Tell Gunther my tongue forgives him, but I never can forget.' Then brought they her to Gunther, and brother and sister were reconciled. Moreover Kriemhild greeted all the knights, save Hagan only which struck the blow; him she would not see, and sooth to say he slank away, knowing the blood-guiltiness that was upon his head.

And after this Kriemhild hindered them not from sending to the land of the Nibelungs for the treasure which Siegfried gave her for a morning-gift after her wedding. Eight thousand warriors went with Kriemhild and Giselher and Gernot to the mountain where Alberich the dwarf lurked always to mind the gold.

And Alberich said, 'Siegfried took the cloud-cloak from us, and the treasure was his to give to whomsoever he willed. I and the Nibelung men are his liege servants.' With that he took the keys of the treasure-house and delivered them up to Kriemhild.

Then they began to get the treasure out. It was so great that it took twelve huge waggons day and night four days in going to and fro betwixt the cavern and the beach to lade the ships therewith. It was so great that its price could not be reckoned. It was a heap of gold and chosen gems—a hoard so rich and big that if one had the mind to buy up the whole world, its price would be a mere handful which none would miss from out the heap; and hidden

amongst it lay the golden wishing-rod, which whoso could find should rule the earth and all therein.

They brought this mighty treasure away to Worms, and there crammed every tower and chamber in the castle with jewels and red gold, piled up like corn upon a granary floor. Kriemhild recked little of it; how gladly would she have given it all to win her lord to life again! With open hand she dealt the treasure out to all which came, to rich and poor alike; until the world rang with the bounty of the widowed queen, and foreign knights from all lands flocked to Worms to share the gold which she showered forth as it had been dross.

But Hagan was afraid, and put Gunther on his guard. 'This will not do: a few more months and Kriemhild will have bought up all the warriors in the world and won them to her service. She must be stayed.'.

Gunther answered, 'I cannot hinder her: the hoard is hers; scarce have I regained her favour as it is. I will not give her more offence, neither care I how she scatters her treasure.'

Hagan said, 'This is folly; if you care not for yourself, have some regard for Burgundy. If you restrain her not, I must: so lay the blame on me; she cannot hate me worse.'

Then Gunther went upon a journey, and while he was gone Hagan prevailed over Kriemhild's chamberlains which kept her treasure, and got the keys. When Kriemhild made complaint to her brothers Gernot and Giselher, they feigned to be very angry, and said that if Hagan had not been their kinsman it should certainly have cost him his life; and as she continually upbraided them, Gernot said to Hagan, 'Better this treasure were flung into the river than cause such a-do; for if it is spent, it will harm us, and if it is locked, there is no peace within the palace.'. After that both the brothers took leave of their sister, saying they also must needs go on a journey; and so left her alone

with Hagan. He got the treasure out of the castle and bore it away, and cast it into the Rhine at Lochheim at a place he knew of, whence he thought to recover it at a convenient season.

When the three brothers came back, they all said that they were very angry with Hagan, and they banished him from the palace for a time, and so made peace with Kriemhild. But she being very unhappy, after a while went away from her brothers to dwell with her mother Uta in her palace at Lorsch, hard by the abbey. Thither also she caused Siegfried's bones to be brought, and had them buried beside Lorsch minster, where they lie to this day.

III. THE VENGEANCE OF KRIEMHILD.

It befell after Kriemhild had been thirteen years a widow, that Helcke, wife of Etzel king of the Huns, died; and Etzel sent messengers with rich presents to ask Kriemhild in marriage. Chief of the messengers was the trusty margrave, Rudeger of Bechlaren. When Gunther knew their errand he was well inclined towards them; neither was he minded to heed the warning of Hagan, who bade him look well to it, for that Etzel was a powerful king, and Kriemhild as his queen might work them much mischief. Gunther said, 'The mightier the king the greater honour. The Huns live far away; I fear them not.' Giselher also rebuked Hagan, saying, 'You have cost my sister many a tear. Already have you robbed her of her mate and treasure; why hinder her from finding new?' Gernot said likewise, 'Fear nothing; we shall never go on Etzel's land; there will be peace in your time and in mine.' Hagan answered, 'Do as you will. I know that Kriemhild hateth you all, and chiefly me. Here in Burgundy she cannot work us harm, but whoso setteth

her on high is a fool; he putteth a scourge into her hand and bareth his back to the smiter.' 'Peace, Hagan, she is our sister; we will make amends, though late, for thwarting all her life.' So spake Giselher. Hagan frowned, and as he turned away laughed scornfully and muttered 'Fools!'

Margrave Rudeger came praying Kriemhild to bestow her love upon his master Etzel. Courteously she listened while he told of Etzel's might and royal state, of his riches, and how he ruled twelve kingdoms and a score and more of princedoms. She answered wearily, 'I have lost already more than woman ever won before. Of what avail your little heaps of gold to me that owned the Nibelung hoard? A crown, a kingdom, tempts me not. No king was ever yet so strong as Siegfried. I have been Siegfried's wife—be that your answer. All other kings are less than he.'

Rudeger said, 'Fair queen, the Huns are many; they are firm fast friends to all within their borders; strong to shelter, powerful to avenge a wrong.'

Then Kriemhild wakened from her listlessness. As one that talketh with herself she said, 'I have no friends; alone I muse and weep, or sing at mass within the minster the while I let them filch my power away. Lo, what a feeble thing am I become! Hearken, Sir Rudeger; if I could count on friends—strong helpful friends—perchance I might be tempted to be queen again.'

He answered, 'Lady, count on me, upon my kinsmen and my vassals. We will be foremost in avenging you on any man who wrongs our master's queen.'

'But Etzel,' she said, 'is he not a heathen man?'

'Nay, lady, a good man as kings go; an upright man. He was converted once; but finding Christians much like heathen folk, he went back to his old faith. His people love him as a just and kindly man. As many Christian knights as heathen sit around his board. He heedeth

rites but little, so he can live an honest life, and doubtless would be christened if you willed.'

Now both Kriemhild's mother and brethren urged her to the match, but each for a different reason. Queen Utá, since a great alliance was for the honour of their line; King Gunther, because the sight of her brought always to his mind his treachery; Gernot, because he wearied of her complaints; but Giselher, since he loved his sister well and sought her good.

So Kriemhild was easily persuaded to follow the bent of her own mind. A great company of her kinsfolk and the chiefs of Burgundy accompanied her as far as the Danube. There she took leave of her brothers with kisses and fair words, insomuch that they went away light-hearted, thinking that she had clean forgiven and forgotten all. Then with Eckewart, her faithful chamberlain, and her maidens, she followed margrave Rudeger. Of all the Nibelung riches she brought away but twelve chests of gold; yet when she lamented the smallness of her dowry, Rudeger said, 'If my lady had all dwarf Alberich's treasure back again, I would have left it all behind: it would not make her one whit dearer in my master's eyes.'

Forth rode King Etzel out of Hungary to meet his bride. With him were knights of well-nigh every land and tongue; Greek, Russian, Pole, Wallachian, Thuringian, Dane. At Tulna they met the queen, and she, being lifted from her palfrey, laid aside her veil and kissed the twelve noblest men, as Rudeger had taught her that the custom of the Huns was. Then Kriemhild greeted the king, who was greatly enamoured of her beauty and her royalness. They journeyed to Vienna, and there for seventeen days they kept the marriage-feast and made a tournament. The city could not hold the knights that flocked thither from every quarter of the earth; they encamped for miles about the

country, so that the people said, 'Queen Kriemhild did not scatter the Nibelung gold for naught.'

After this the king and queen went home to Haimburg, the royal city of Hungary. In due time Kriemhild bare her lord a son; and she called his name Ortlieb, and had him baptised in Christian manner, for there was nothing that Etzel could withhold from her, since she was so dear to him. For long the people loved their queen, and Eckewart her chamberlain, by fair speeches and presents, made hosts of friends for her.

But Kriemhild continually brooded over her wrongs; and so one day she said to King Etzel, 'I pray thee send and bid my kinsfolk to a feast. I would not have this people think that I am an outcast without friends.' And the king appointed two noble minstrels, Werbel and Schwemmelein, to go upon the errand.

And being come to Burgundy, the messengers spake to King Gunther as Kriemhild had bade them. 'Much it grieveth our queen to be forsaken of her kindred all these years. It shameth her in the people's eyes, who, thinking that she hath no friends, esteem her less. Wherefore she doth intreat of her good brothers to come at midsummer to a feast in Hungary; and since the noble knight Sir Hagan knoweth well the road, she prayeth him to come also. We likewise bear our lady's service and good-will to the lady Uta and Queen Brynhild.' Then Gunther took counsel with his brothers and Hagan.

Hagan said, 'Let fools fall into an open trap. Remember all that we have done. Distrust these smooth-tongued messengers. You dare not go.'

Gunther answered, 'Right well know I by Kriemhild's kiss at parting that she hath forgiven us all, save you perchance.'

Moreover Giselher said, 'Shall we, forsooth, be forced to shun our sister, all because Hagan's guilty heart maketh a coward of him! He says *we* dare not go. He means,

he durst not go. Let Hagan stay at home and save his skin, but we will go up to the feast.'

Then answered Hagan, 'Despise my warning if you will, but wrong me not. I am no coward. I say that Kriemhild is our sharpest foe. And therefore I certainly will go with you; for it is not meet that a knight should leave his lords to face their enemies alone.'

King Gunther equipped ten thousand and threescore men to go with him, that the Huns might see the mightiness of the kinsmen of their queen. But there was many an ill-foreboding at their departure. Rumold, to whom Gunther committed the charge of the kingdom till his return, said, 'Alas, master, that you ride forth to this feast.' And the old Queen Uta dreamed that every bird throughout the land fell dead.

Now after twelve days' journey, Hagan brought them out upon a place against the Danube side where the swift river was swollen so deep and broad that they could in nowise wade across, neither was there any boat to ferry them over. And as Hagan went along the river bank by himself to look for a place where it might be forded, he came upon two swan-maidens who had doffed their swan-dresses to bathe. Hagan stole their dresses and made off; but one of the maidens called after him, 'Give us back our swan-raiment and we will tell what shall befall thee, and of the very great renown and profit that shall come to thee and to the host which journeys into Hungary.' So, being pleased with their speech, he gave back their dresses. Then the other laughed, and said, 'My sister did but lie to thee to get our raiment back. Now hear truth, and heed it if thou wilt. Hagan, son of Aldrian, thou shalt die in Etzel's land, and every man of the host shall perish there save the king's chaplain; he only shall go back to Rhineland!'

Hagan answered, 'In vain you lie and cheat, for I will prove you false this very day.' So he left them, and

presently espying a ferryman, beckoned him to come and put him across the river. When the ferryman came to land and saw a stranger, he would not take him into the boat; but Hagan drew his sword and slew the boatman and carried off the ferry-boat. Then Hagan ferried over all the host in companies. And when only the king's chaplain was left on the other bank, he put the boat across again in the dusk of the evening to fetch him; and as soon as he had rowed into the midst of the river, Hagan took the chaplain by the waist and flung him in the water, saying, 'There, you lying women; he shall nevermore see Rhineland!' The chaplain was a strong swimmer and struck out lustily for shore; but Hagan followed in the boat and beat his head down with the oar; yet for all this he could not drown him. The chaplain dived; God brought him safely to the further side; there being landed he hied him back to Rhineland with all speed.

Seeing the chaplain was escaped, Hagan began to despond, and having rowed ashore he set about breaking the boat in pieces; for he thought, if we are to return no more of what avail will it be to us? But when Dankwart asked him what he did, he answered, 'Whatever ill betide us on this evil journey, no coward shall slink home again.' With that he cast the pieces in the river.

Now as they journeyed through Bavaria, Gelfrat the stout margrave came out with seven hundred knights and fell upon Hagan and Dankwart as they marched apart from the host with only a little band of men—for he sought to take vengeance for his ferryman. Howbeit Dankwart overcame Gelfrat and slew him, and his knights, being worsted in the battle, fled.

On the borders of Hungary they came upon Sir Eckewart, Kriemhild's liegeman, who lay sleeping by the wayside. Hagan sprang on him and took his sword away, not knowing who he was; but when Sir Eckewart awaked and Hagan knew him, he gave back his sword and offered

him, beside, many rings of gold to be his friend. Eckewart said, 'I will not have your gifts. The blood of Siegfried is upon your hands. Take heed, for Siegfried's slayer will find no friends amongst the Huns.' Hagan answered, 'If we lack friends we yet can guard ourselves from enemies; but what we most lack now is shelter, and a lodging for the night; we would not sleep upon the ground in this bleak land as thou, it seems, art wont to do.'

Now Sir Rudeger dwelt in a fair house at Bechlaren without the borders of Hungary. Thither Sir Eckewart led them all, and Rudeger and his wife Gotlind gave hearty welcome to the lords of Burgundy, and lodged and feasted them and all their men sumptuously for many days. And when they had rested and must needs go forward, Sir Rudeger gave gifts to everyone of that which each most set his mind upon. He withheld not his fair young daughter from Giselher, but gave her to him to be his bride, and they were betrothed after the manner of the time. They stood within a ring of youths and maidens, in whose sight they pledged their troth and kissed each other. To Gernot he gave a sword; to Gunther a mail-coat of proof. But Hagan asked a gift that brought tears to fair Gotlind's eyes. He would take nothing but a shield that was laid by, kept always covered with a broidered veil of samite; it was decked with stones most precious, worth a thousand marks and more; yet not for that did Gotelind treasure it—her only son had borne it in the battle where he fell; on it they brought his body home. But Hagan asked and had it. He knew it was a precious thing, but, peradventure, knew not all it cost to give. Yet would not Rudeger keep back anything that was in his house from his guests.

Then Rudeger brought the lords of Burgundy to Etzel's palace, and Queen Kriemhild came down to meet them at the castle gate. Gunther, and Gernot, and Hagan she

passed by, but took her brother Giselher by the hand and kissed him.

Then spake Hagan, 'Is this a seemly welcome, passing kings and champions by to greet the youngest and least famous?'

Kriemhild said, 'Tell me; what have you brought me for a present out of Rhineland, to make you welcome in my sight?'

He answered, 'Lady we have no presents in our land befitting the regard of such a mighty queen.'

Then said Kriemhild, 'Have you forgot so soon the Nibelung treasure? When a thief would make amends, at least he giveth back the thing he stole. Have you no present out of that great hoard to bring to me from whom you robbed it all?'

Wrathfully he answered, 'The devil a present I bring. The hoard lies at the bottom of the Rhine. It is enough for him that visits foes to bring his arms and armour.'

Then Kriemhild commanded them to lay their weapons down before they passed into the hall. And when they would not, the queen cried fiercely, 'Some one has warned these men. My brothers even doubt me. If I could find who put them on their guard he certainly should die.'

Then outspake bold Sir Dietrich, one of the trustiest knights about her court: 'Many have warned them, lady; I for one. God grant there be no need of warning, for treachery to a guest were a foul sin. But since thou dost welcome them thus, I bid them still take heed, and keep their weapons by them. Now punish me as thou hast said.'

But Kriemhild blushed red with shame: she feared Sir Dietrich: and so the knights passed armed into the hall. And Gunther and Dietrich made a league of friendship between them.

King Etzel from his throne espied the big broad-chested Hagan, his black hair dashed with grey, and asked Kriemhild concerning him.

She told him, 'That is Hagan, son of Aldrian of Tronje,—a strong champion, but cruel of hand and coward of heart.'

'Nay,' the king said, 'thou art wrong, fair Kriemhild. If he be Aldrian's son, I cannot but befriend him for his father's sake. Well knew I Aldrian; I dubbed him knight, and he was ever a true comrade unto me. So he is Aldrian's son!' Then he bade Hagan come near, and began to speak with him about his father; and as they talked the old king's heart waxed young again to hear of days gone by.

The next day Hagan and Volker crossed the courtyard and went and sat alone upon a bench within a chamber hard by a hall of Kriemhild's.

About Kriemhild in her hall were threescore Hunnish knights. Straightway she brake out a-weeping; and when they asked what troubled her she said, 'I have no peace while Hagan lives. O friends, these many years have I bewailed my helplessness because I could not smite the man that slew my lord. Yonder he is, within the chamber; only one man with him.' They answered with one accord, 'Speak but the word and Hagan dies.' She said, 'Follow me to the chamber-door. Wait you without the door while I go in and talk with him. And when you hear from his own mouth what he hath done, tarry no longer but rush in and fall on him.'

Howbeit one listened at the queen's door and ran and told Hagan what threatened him. And Hagan said to Volker, 'Friend, wilt thou stand by me?'—'Aye, to death,' he answered. 'Then we will try the mettle of these Hunnish men.'

Presently came Kriemhild to the door. Volker asked his comrade, 'Shall we rise and greet the Queen?'—'Nay,' answered Hagan; 'rise not from off the bench, move not a hair, lest those without should think that we flinch. I care not for her wrath. Sit still and speak no word.'

Kriemhild came in, her crown upon her head, and looked for them to rise. They stirred not, but gazed at her; she at them. Then Hagan took his eyes from off the queen, and having loosed the great sword from his side, he laid it across his knees, and turned it slowly about as though he needed to examine it. The handle of the sword was gold; a precious jasper glittered in the pommel; the scabbard was trimmed with red.

Kriemhild scarce could endure the torment of the sight. How well she knew that sword—her husband's good sword Balmung—and in Hagan's hands!

She drew herself up straight, her cheeks aflame, and anger flashing from her eyes; 'How dare you, murderer, wear my Siegfried's sword?'

He toyed with the blade as though he heard her not.

'Quick, answer me. How dare you in your bloody hand bear what his honest fingers held?'

Hagan lifted his eyes again and looked at her. Cold and unmoved he said, 'Because I slew your husband, and being his slayer took the spoil. If those men of yours without think that they can take it from me, let them in.' Again he fell to toying with the blade and mused aloud, 'A pretty sword. How keen of edge! The blade as heavy as an axe. A trusty sword, fair queen.'

She cried aloud, 'You hear? He owns the shedding of my husband's blood! Come in and rid me of this murderer!'

But the men tarried without, each looking that his fellow should first go in. They feared the two stern champions; they had heard of Balmung, which Siegfried made renowned throughout all lands, and durst not enter. One by one they slank away and scattered themselves about the castle quickly lest Hagan should find out which they were that sought his life and should take vengeance on them.

Then was Kriemhild sore vexed, and went away to her chamber to bewail herself.

After this, Hagan had little fear by day, because Kriemhild durst not do anything openly for fear of the king, and besides that, many of her best champions would not have suffered treason to be done against a guest. Yet, because of their pride and courage, there was not found one of all the men of Burgundy that would go and tell the king what Kriemhild plotted. Nevertheless, at night Hagan and Volker put their armour on and kept watch at the gateway of the house where Gunther and the Burgundians slept. One midnight there stole up a band of Hunnish men whom Kriemhild charged, 'Strike no man but Hagan only;' but seeing the man whom they wanted armed and watching in his mail-coat, they would not assail him, for they feared to wake the rest. When they went to church the men of Burgundy went with their armour on, their swords girt at their sides; they sat together in a company, and all the while the mass was singing they scowled at the Huns not knowing which of them were foes, and the Huns scowled back on them.

Then being baulked in every plan to put Hagan alone to death, the queen's longing to be recompensed on him grew so fierce that she recked not though all should perish so he died. And when the tournament came on she pondered, 'If we could only tempt a Rhinelander to slay a knight of ours, no need then to bespeak our people's hate for them: the tourney would end in battle and I should be avenged.'

Many a knight she sent into the tilt-yard to vex the Burgundians both with words and blows. Moodily Queen Kriemhild sat beside her lord and watched how Gunther's folk bare down the Huns and cleared the lists without quarrel or mishap. The tilt was over, so thought Gunther's men, and they were masters of the lists, when

lo there came riding forth a Hunnish knight in dainty dress to show his finery before the dames. 'See yonder ladies' darling!' said Volker to his fellows, 'a tap of a spear would fling him. But he shall not come on our ground until the just is over. I will ride at him. If he choose to flee, why let him; if he stand, Heaven help his gilt and gew-gaws.' So saying he pricked his steed and set his lance in rest. The Hun fled not, but spurred to meet him. Volker's spear passed through his body and bore him off the saddle, dead. Then all the Huns called out for arms, and setting themselves in array against the Rhinelanders, would have straightway given them battle, only that Etzel rode in front and snatched the sword from out the hand of the first man who drew his weapon, crying, 'Back, you brawlers! The man was slain by misadventure. I saw the blow. Volker's horse stumbled.' So he patched up a peace betwixt the jealous hosts, and led them to the banquet table.

When they had feasted together, King Etzel bethought him how to bind the two peoples into friendship; and he sent and fetched his little son Ortlieb, that Kriemhild bare him. Then he set the boy in the midst of Kriemhild's kinsmen, saying, 'Behold my son who will sit upon my throne. I will put him in your hands, and you shall take him back with you to Rhineland and bring him up; for I wish nothing better than that he should grow bold and fearless like the men of Burgundy. When he is become a man and rules this land he will repay your care, and be your strong ally.' But Hagan, grown surly in his cups, jeered at the boy and said, 'Your weakly youngster has not got the making of a man in him. We none of us shall trouble Ortlieb's court, but we may see his grave.' Grieved was the king to hear this bitter speech, and wrathful waxed the Huns. Yet Etzel kept them back and quieted the tumult because of his honour and his royal word.

But Etzel's peacemaking was vain; for Kriemhild would not rest till she had set the people by the ears. She bribed Sir Blödel with money, land, and castles to go at all hazards and stir up a deadly strife with any one of Gunther's chiefs.

Blödel gathered together a thousand Huns and led them to the hall where Dankwart and his comrades sat at meat. Hagan was not there; and so he came to Dankwart, who asked what his errand was with such a company. He said, 'A life for Kriemhild from her lord's foul murderers,' and smote him in the face. Dankwart up-started from the table. 'She shall have a life,' he said; then swung his heavy sword and struck the head off Blödel's body. Seeing their master dead, the Huns in fury ran on Gunther's men and put numbers of them to the sword. Many had no weapons, having laid them aside as they sat at meat; these tore up seats and benches, snatched up the heavy settles in their hands, and fought like madmen. The meats lay trampled under foot among the corpses; the floor ran blood mingled with spilt mead which splashed them as they fought. But the Huns were driven out and left five hundred of their dead within the hall. Dankwart and his men, all bloody, pursued them out of doors and struck them down as they fled. Before King Etzel knew, many thousand Huns had armed themselves to avenge their fellows. These came up and drave back Dankwart and his men into the house again and swarmed thick about it for a stone-cast every way. They fought till Dankwart only and twelve comrades were left alive: the hall was heaped up with nine thousand dead. Then Dankwart was fain to beg a boon of his foemen. 'Give us air,' he cried; 'there is no more room within for dead or living; we stifle with the blood and heat. Let us out; few though we be, we do not grudge to die; but let us breathe the air again and die in fight like warriors.'

The Huns of their courtesy stood from the door and let them out. Then fought they fiercer than before, the twelve against an army, till Dankwart looked for his comrades and he alone was left. Then set he to work to cut a road through all that host. In both hands he gripped his heavy sword; to right and left he swung it swift as lightning; the Huns went down on either side like barley bowing to the sickle. So he made a way and came out safe and ran, the Huns all following, till he gained the palace. He bounded up the staircase, overturning the cup-bearers and men bearing dishes from King Etzel's table, and came reeking with blood to where Hagan and Gunther and their comrades sat over the wine-cup. He told his tale in a breath: a score of Rhineland men ran down with him to keep the door.

The child Ortlieb was prattling at the table. Hagan said, 'We will pledge ourselves once more together, Burgundian and Hun; and I will pour you royal wine.' He caught the child and smote it in the neck with his sword: the head rolled into Kriemhild's lap. Then began a great and terrible slaughter. Hagan smote off the hand of Werbel the minstrel wherewith he played the viol, saying, 'Take that for bearing the message into Burgundy.' Then Rhinelander and Hun fought for dear life, till corpses piled the floor.

Sir Dietrich was there in the hall with many of his men, but held himself aloof. He would not fight against Gunther's knights, because of the league which he had made with him, neither would he fight against King Etzel, being his liegeman. Kriemhild crept trembling to him, saying, 'Save me from Hagan, good Dietrich, for he thirsts to have my blood.' He said, 'I will do all that a man may.'

Then Sir Dietrich leaped upon a table and lifting his voice above all the din of swords, called on Gunther. Gunther came: 'What would you? Have we harmed a

man of yours, good friend? Be sure it was mishap, and we will make amends. But hinder me not, for we are hard bestead.' He answered, 'Nay, dear comrade. All my men are safe. But since we fight not, give me leave to pass out, me and mine. This bloody banquet surfeits us.' Gunther said, 'Go, take with you whom you will, except my mortal foemen.' And they slacked the fight for a little, that Dietrich and his men might pass in safety. Then Sir Dietrich took the queen beneath his arm, and sheltered King Etzel on his other side; five hundred of his champions closed about him. Unmolested they passed down the stairs and out through the door.

The noise of battle in the palace was heard all day; but towards nightfall it slacked, for Gunther and his men were masters of the hall, and every Hun therein was slain. From the windows and down the staircase they threw the dead in heaps; seven thousand bodies and more.

Day after day the multitude of Huns that surrounded them brake down the door and fought their way into the hall; yet came they not out any more, save through the windows, when Gunther's men tumbled their bodies out upon the corpse-heap.

Then Kriemhild sent to her brothers, saying, 'Give Hagan up to me, and I will make peace and answer for your lives. You cannot keep him from me long. Why perish with him? You are my brethren.' But they sent answer back, 'We will not give our brave comrade up. We will have grace for all or none.'

Then the queen commanded to make fast the door, and burn down the hall. The Huns kindled it on all sides; a fresh wind rose and wrapped the house in fire. Loud roared the flames; billows of smoke all flecked with fire went rolling up to the sky.

The heat was terrible; but Hagan said, 'There is blood enough within to quench the burning timbers as they

drop. Stand close against the walls and get what air there is. The roof is vaulted and will not fall; the walls are stone. If we can only bear the heat and tread the fire-flakes out, we may escape.'

The smoke grew stifling hot, and parched their tongues so that they hung from their mouths with drought. They knew not what to do, till they saw one stoop down to a corpse yet warm and draw the blood. Then drank they all the self-same draught, and the blood new strung their sinews, quenched their thirst, and made them fierce.

So it befell that in the morning when the Huns went to the hall to seek the ashes of their enemies, they found them yet alive, and guarding the smoking doorway sword in hand. Twelve hundred men, urged forward by the queen, stormed a passage in; but Gunther's men drave out some of them, and slew the rest and ramparted the doorway with their bodies.

When Kriemhild found it vain for the Huns to contend against her kinsmen, she went with King Etzel to Rudeger and besought his help. He said, 'How can I? They have eaten of my bread and pledged me in the wine-cup. My daughter is betrothed to Giselher. I brought them hither. I have no cause of strife with one of them. I pray thee ask me not.' Then she reminded him of his pledge: 'Didst thou not promise to be first to avenge me on a wronger? I hold thee to thy word.' Then Rudeger was heart-sorry, and said to the king, 'Take back, I pray, all the lands and castles I hold of thee, and let me go away and wander over the earth without purse or scrip; but constrain me not to do this thing.' Then both king and queen fell down at his feet, and clasped his knees and intreated him very sore, till he said, 'God help me, for I put my soul in jeopardy. No man will ever trust Rudeger more; nor take him for a friend. For my oath's sake I will go, but for my name's sake God grant that I come not back alive.'

Giselher looked out and saw Rudeger riding at the head of five hundred knights, and he said to his brothers, 'Rejoice, for here cometh an unlooked-for succour from my father-in-law.' When Rudeger was come before the hall he set his shield at his feet, and greeted the men of Burgundy but defied them not. He said, 'It is not of my will I join this fray. I have no choice. Stand well on your defence, for I am become your foe.'

Then said Gunther, 'God forbid that you should turn against us. You cannot fight with us, nor we with you, for nothing can make us aught but friends.' Gernot said likewise, 'Your gifts are in our hands; God's blessing on you for your kindness! The sword you gave has never failed me through this fight. But how could I strike the giver with his gift?' Moreover Giselher prayed him, 'If thou canst not help us, at least turn back. Thou couldest not smite me, and widow thy daughter ere she be a bride.'

Rudeger was deeply moved, but he answered, 'I have no choice; my word is passed. Quit you right manfully, and do not fear to strike for friendship's sake. Think only of me as a foe. You cannot hate me more than I hate myself. But I will not go back.'

Hagan said, 'I thank thee for the shield which Gotlind gave me. It has warded many a blow, though now being full of rifts and well-nigh hewn in twain, it is scarce fit for a man to bear in fight.'

Then Rudeger took up his own shield which lay at his feet and gave it to Hagan, saying, 'Wield it well, and mayest thou bear it safe to Burgundy.'

Even the stern Hagan was melted at the gift. He said, 'Good friend, my hand shall never touch thee in the fray.'

No more they parleyed. Margrave Rudeger drew his sword and led his knights forward. Gunther and his brothers kept the gate, but stood aside and let him pass; in part, since they feared to strike the noble Rudeger, and

partly because they thought to take his life more surely in the hall if his mind was bent to be their enemy.

Right faithfully Sir Rudeger behaved himself that day. He fought as a knight well used to battle, and quickly strewed the hall with dead. He would not stay his hand, nor parley with any man. Terrible waxed the slaughter, and the brothers were hard put to it for their lives. Then Gernot made Rudeger turn about and fight with him; for he said, 'You will not leave us here a single man alive.' Fiercely they leaped upon each other, greedy of fame. Many a deadly stroke they warded, watching each other's wary eyes. Then Rudeger's blade came crashing down through Gernot's helmet, and cut him to the brain. With his last strength Gernot lifted on high the sword which Rudeger had given him and slew the giver therewith, cleaving him through shield and mail-coat down the shoulder to the heart. Together they dropped dead. After that Gunther and his men spared none in their fury. Many an unwounded knight was trampled down in the press and stifled among the dead. At eventide a little band of the Burgundians were left alive but well-nigh fainting with the heavy strife. Their enemies were slain; they were masters of the hall again. For weariness they laid them down upon the dead to rest; but as they espied the bodies of Rudeger and Gernot they wept.

Kriemhild listened without the hall till the din and clamour ceased. But Rudeger returned not nor his men. Then bitterly she cried, 'O woe is me, to trust half-hearted friends! If Rudeger had been steadfast all would have been well: but he has made some treaty with them, and betrayed me. He has lied.'

Volker heard her, and looked out from the hall window and spake to the queen: 'If anything were a-wanting to reveal the blackness of your heart, it were your deeming Rudeger could be treacherous. Lady, he died for you.'

And he lifted Rudeger's body at the window that the queen might see.

Kriemhild saw, and wailed and sobbed in tearless grief. The margrave dead in vain! Her aching eyelids were too hot to weep.

But King Etzel did nothing but moan, saying, 'Would that I had a man to slay this traitor Hagan, and leave the land in quietness!'

Sir Dietrich heard how Rudeger and his men were slain, and he said, 'This is a foul deed of the Burgundians. They never had so fast a friend as Rudeger. His life at least they might have spared and made him prisoner. I never loved a man so well as I loved Rudeger. If they have slain him they shall answer for it.' Then gathered he his men, and there came with him old Hildebrand and Wolfhart, Helfrich and Helmnot, Wolfwine and Wolfbrand, and a great company of warriors. And they came to the hall and demanded to know the truth of the matter. Hagan told them: 'Alas, the tale is all too true. We grieve for Rudeger as much as you can. We bore him no enmity nor he us, but he fought us for his oath's sake to the queen. He wrought us more mischief than an enemy. He would not yield nor parley. To right and left he slew our men. What could we do?' Wolfhart said, ''Tis vain to make excuse for such a crime. I could not sorrow more for my own father than for Rudeger. Where is the man that loved him not? And you, his friends and mine, have slain him. Cursed be your friendship!'

Then Hildebrand commanded that they should give up the body of Rudeger to them for burial. But Hagan would not. 'Nay,' said he, 'the margrave's body is ours. He lived and died our friend; and none can pay him equal honour at his burial. Of dire misfortune, not of malice, we smote him. We honour and love him. We

mourn most for him. If you would have his body, come and take it if you can, and if you dare.'

Wrathful at this defiance, the knights of Dietrich thronged on the men that kept the gate: they bore them down and forced a way up stairs into the hall. The dwindled band of Burgundians fought with a lionlike courage and sold their lives full dear. But one by one their champions dropped. Volker was slain by Hildebrand; Helfrich struck Dankwart down; Wolfhart took young Giselher's life. Not unavenged they fell. So fiercely fought that little band that when the sun began to sink the numbers on either side were at last grown equal. Only four were left alive—Gunther and Hagan; Dietrich and Hildebrand.

'You are faint and weary, both of you,' said Dietrich; 'no renown could we win by conflict. Wherefore yield yourselves up, and I will answer for your lives and see you safely back to Burgundy.'

'That were a shameful thing,' answered Hagan, 'for two to yield to two. Never since we have been in Hungary have we fought such easy odds. If you fear, yield yourselves, or get fresh champions. We fear not.' So they fell to; Hagan with Dietrich, Gunther with Hildebrand.

Hagan drove Dietrich through the hall and down the stairs into the open plain; there Hagan's strength failed him, and Dietrich dealt him a sword-wound deep and long that fetched him swooning to his knees. Then warily he approached the fainting man, sprang on him, locked his body in his arms, and bound him with a heavy cord. In like manner Hildebrand served Gunther, for he stunned the wearied king with a mighty blow upon the helm and bound him fast.

Dietrich brought the tired captives in their bonds to Kriemhild. The queen laughed merrily and loud, and said, 'Thanks, good Sir Dietrich.' Then she spake softly

to Gunther, saying, 'Welcome, my brother. I give you hearty welcome. And Hagan—he is welcome too.' But there was hunger in her hot red eyes. So Sir Dietrich being beguiled by the gentleness of her speech, and heeding not the strangeness of her way, left both the captives in the queen's charge, commending them to her good care; and took his leave.

But no sooner was Sir Dietrich gone than the Queen commanded her servants to lock the prisoners in two dungeons, apart the one from the other.

Kriemhild went down to Hagan in his prison-house, and looked him in the face with a long wistful stare, but spake not. Then she asked fiercely, 'Where is my gold? My bright red gold? Give back my gold and I will set you free.'

He looked at her, bewildered at the hunger of her eyes, but answered, 'The gold? I took an oath to tell no living soul where it was hid so long as one of my lords was alive. Two of them are dead, but Gunther lives yet.'

Then she went away, saying within herself, 'Gunther keeps me from my gold. How dares he!' And she spake to her servants, 'Quick, go to Gunther's dungeon. Bring me his head.'

They brought the ghastly thing all bleeding to her. She took it by the hair and went to Hagan. She spake fast and eagerly—'See! he is dead! Not one of them is left alive. Gunther is dead, and Gernot and Giselher. Naught hinders. Tell me where you hid my gold, my blood-red gold?'

He answered, 'None knows now but God and I. And I will never tell!'

Against her bosom she clutched a sword with a golden handle. A jasper glittered in the pommel: the scabbard was trimmed with red. She flashed it forth; in both hands lifted up her husband's blade on high and smote off Hagan's head at a blow.

King Etzel sorrowed for Hagan. He bent his grey head upon his hands and leaned his elbows on his tottering knees. He mouthed and whined, 'Alas for Hagan! Wéll-a-day! To think the noblest knight that ever wielded sword should die by a woman's hand at last! I need must weep for him.'

But Hildebrand ran down into the dungeon; saw Kriemhild gloating like a fiend over the headless corpse; and half in fury, half in pity, drew his sword and struck the mad woman dead.

In the great mead-hall they served the feast; the savoury meat was set; the cup out-poured. Alone sat old King Etzel and Sir Dietrich at the board and wept. They drank not of the mead-horn; their meat was sorrow: tears had they for drink. So Pain dogs Pleasure's steps. Ended was the feast.

WALTER OF AQUITAINE.

I. THE BETROTHAL OF WALTER AND HILDEGUND.

From the Eastern lands far away the host of the Huns swept on like a whirlwind, and the hearts of all men failed for fear, lest on them might fall the sword of Etzel the Scourge of God. Onward he went to the fair city of Worms, where King Gibich ruled his Niflungs in the vine-clothed land of the Rhine: but there was none who dared to lift hand against him, and the Niflung King was glad to buy peace of Etzel with gold and blood, for the Hun must have hostages for the good faith of him who sent the treasure. So the young Hagen was sent to Etzel, for Gibich was loth to send his son Gunther, who was yet a babe lying on his mother's breast; and straightway Etzel hastened away from Worms to spread havoc through the rich lands of Herrich the Burgundian King. From the high tower of Chalon the warder saw the clouds of dust thickening in the far distance, and he hastened to the king with the tidings. 'The hosts of the Huns are rolling hither,' he said, 'like the white-crested billows on the sea.' But the tidings of the craven pact which Gibich had made came even more swiftly than the armies of Etzel, and King Herrich knew that he too must buy peace from the men with whom his Burgundians dared not fight. So he sent messengers who went in the guise of conquered men without their arms, and told their errand to the Hunnish

king. 'Thy master is no fool,' said Etzel to the bode, 'since he knows that fat peace is better than lean war. I too love a good bargain, and I have a sword. So let your king come to me.' But Etzel would not be contented with gold only, and King Herrich was forced to send his own child Hildegund, the fairest maiden in all the land.

Further yet to the West swept the Huns of Etzel till they came to the lands of the Basques where Alphar the father of Walter was the king: and Alphar knew straightway that the covenant which he had made with Herrich had been made in vain; for it had been sworn between them that when the youth of Hildegund and Walter should be ripe, they should wed together, and the land of Burgundy and Spain should be one realm. 'The Niflungs and the hosts of Herrich stood not before Etzel,' he said, 'and I too must yield up my treasures and my son.' Glad at heart was the King of the Huns as he feasted his eyes on the treasure: and when he departed homewards to hide it in a strong cairn, Walter the son of Alphar went with him.

But yet more glad was Etzel, when, as he came once more under his own roof, he looked at the weapon which had smitten down his foes. 'Rest thee, my sword, and be still,' he said; 'thou hast had thy fill of blood. I too will rest, and the sounds of song and revelry shall be heard throughout my halls, until the whole land shall ring with the glory of my feasting.' So rested Etzel from the toil of strife, and the hostages had kindly treatment at his hand. By his side grew up Walter and Hagen, getting all knightly learning and craft, while Hildegund abode in the chambers of Helche the queen, who trained her in housewifely arts and made her the mistress and guardian of all her treasures. Meanwhile King Gibich had died at Worms in the land of the Franks, and Gunther his son, now that he was king in his father's place, would not keep the shameful pact with the Huns, and from that

day forth sent no more tribute to Etzel. No sooner were the tidings brought to Hagen than he fled away, nor stayed anywhere to rest until he reached his home: but Walter was carrying on war for Etzel when the news came, and from this strife too, as from all others, he came back conqueror.

Full of fear was the heart of Queen Helche, when she knew that Hagen had fled, and she hastened to speak with her lord. 'The props of our sway are tottering,' she said; 'Hagen is gone, and if we take not good heed, Walter will follow in his steps. Speak then cunningly to him and say, "Never was warrior dearer to me than thou art, and well I know that thou hast not spared thy strength or thy blood in serving me. But Etzel requites not his friends with mere words: and it is time that I should show in deed how much I love thee. Look round and seek throughout the land for a bride, and I will give her a dowry such as no king has ever bestowed on his daughter." Tell him this, and it may be he will remain true to us.' The words of Helche seemed good to Etzel, and he spoke, as she bade him, to Walter. But Walter had long since set it in his heart to break the yoke from off his neck. So, having thought within himself for a while, he thanked Etzel for his proffered bounty, but a wife he said that he could not take. 'If I choose a bride, I shall be tempted to stay at home, wasting my days in pleasant ease, and the thought of war will become hateful to me. Bid me do anything else, and whether it be at morningtide or in the evening, I am ready to do it, and to do it with the more gladness that I have neither wife nor children for whom I need to spare my blood.' Thus he besought the king to press him no more, and Etzel believed his words.

But now there came to Walter by a sure hand the tidings that the Franks of King Gunther had taken heart, and that the hosts of the Niflungs were making ready to march

against the Huns and King Etzel with bow and shield and spear. The news filled Walter's heart with a fierce joy, and with the choicest of the warriors by his side he set the bands of the Huns in array for a mimic battle. Loud and long rose the war-cries, and oak and ashen lances clashed in grim play together, while the glitter of the spears was like the lightning's flash, or the quivering of snow-flakes driven before the storm. But when spears and arrows were all spent, the heat of the strife was so kindled in their hearts, that with drawn swords they rushed wildly against each other, and soon many a horse and many a warrior lay dead upon the ground. High above all rose the sword of Walter, and the bravest of the warriors shrank away from his stroke, till, at last, he drew from his side a golden horn, and praising his men for their prowess, threw an oak wreath round his head, and amid banner-bearers and warriors hastened in triumph to the castle of King Etzel, where many a squire came forth to hold his horse. 'How went it in the battle, lord Walter?' they asked; but little said he to them, for he was weary, and he went on quickly to the great hall, where he found the maiden Hildegund alone, and greeted her with the kiss of honour. 'Give me a cup of wine,' he said, 'that I die not of thirst;' and Hildegund gave him a golden goblet of sparkling wine, which he drained off at a draught. Then as he gave back the beaker, his eyes rested lovingly on the maiden, and as she looked timidly and blushing towards him, he took her by the hand and said, 'Long have we shared the same lot, and lived as hostages in the land of strangers and foes; long have we been far from each other, even when we were near; and long have we forgotten the bond that is between us, and the covenant of our fathers. Why hide it longer from ourselves? Let us call their oath to mind.'

But Hildegund feared that Walter was but jesting, and she sat silent awhile till she had put her thoughts in order.

Then she said, 'Thy voice has a sweet sound, if thy words be true. But art thou not mocking me, Walter? Thou canst make choice from all the maidens of the land, and Etzel himself has pledged thee his word that whosoever she be, the maiden whom thou choosest shall be thine. How canst thou, who mightest have a king's daughter, think save in jest on the poor maiden Hildegund?' 'Away with these dreams,' said Walter; 'my word is as true as gold. Only look gently upon me, and tell me that thou wilt keep my trust, and I will tell thee all the secrets of my heart.' Then Hildegund sank sobbing on his breast, as she said, 'My greatest joy on earth is to do thee service, and to have thy thanks is my highest reward.' And Walter answered, 'Our exile makes me sick at heart, and in bitter grief my thoughts wander away to the Fatherland. Long have I yearned to flee away, like Hagen: but I could not go for very shame that Hildegund should remain behind me alone.' Then from the depths of Hildegund's heart came the words, 'To follow thee, my lord, in need and peril is the one yearning of my soul: and right gladly will I go to live with thee at home or to die.' 'Listen then to me,' whispered Walter in her ear, 'and give good heed to my words. The treasures of Etzel and Helche are in thy keeping. Take from that treasure the triply-woven coat of mail, and the helmet which thou knowest for its cunning workmanship. Take also two chests and fill them with jewels of gold till thou canst not lift either to thy breast; and be ready with all that we need for the journey, when the sun shall have sunk seven times in the west. Then will I bid the Huns to a feast, in which the hall shall swim with wine; but though men and maidens drain the flashing goblets, drink thou but sparingly, and when the women rise up from the banquet, make haste and do that which I bid thee. While the men are slaves to wine, we will speed away at eventide to the land of our fathers.'

So passed the seven days, and Walter made high festival for King Etzel and Queen Helche and all the chieftains of the Huns. Brightly flashed the wine in gold and crystal goblets; but the men yet tarried at the banquet board, when the women had gone to Helche's chamber and there let their tongues run free. Then from the nail Walter took down the great horn, and kneeling before the throne of Etzel, he said: 'O peerless in war and battle, show us that thou art peerless also in quaffing the blood-red wine.' Taking the horn from his hand, as Walter's drinking song echoed through the hall, the king drained the vessel at a single draught, and after him the horn and the song went round to all the guests. There was hurrying to and fro of busy feet as the menials passed each other, some bringing in the foaming beakers, others going out with empty goblets. Shame was it for the man who should lag in the race; so all did their best, and the wine did its best also. Loud grew the songs and shouts of the wassailers and the clatter of the wine-cups, till all lay like the dead on a battle-field, and Sleep came down with heavy wings to seize the prey stretched out before him.

Then hurrying from the hall, Walter bade Hildegund hasten to fetch the treasures, while from the stable he brought forth his mighty warhorse Lion. On either side of the saddle he hung one of the chests which the maiden had filled with golden jewels; and clad from head to heel in his armour, went forth with the maiden from the court which he should see again never more.

II. THE BATTLE FOR THE GOLDEN HOARD.

ALL night Walter and Hildegund hastened on, till the dawn light flushed the sky; and then, turning aside from the road, they plunged into the woods, lest haply Etzel's men might espy them. But so full of fear was the maiden's heart, that her limbs trembled if the wind moaned through the branches, or if the cry of a beast was echoed through the forest.

Meanwhile, all was still in the halls of Etzel, until when many an hour had gone by in heavy slumber the chiefs arose and went to seek Walter, that they might thank him for the feast with which he had gladdened their hearts. Last of all came Etzel, holding his aching head in his hands, and half wishing that the same pain had fallen also to the lot of Walter; and, yet more, when the warriors told him that nowhere could they find their host, Etzel thought that in some hidden corner he must be sleeping off the fumes of the wine. But Helche the queen knew that Hildegund had fled, when she came not to do her wonted duty, and all the house was filled with the sound of her weeping. 'Cursed be the banquet of yestereve which has cost two kingdoms, and has robbed us at one stroke of the best of our treasures. As I foreboded, so has it all come to pass. Our hoard is gone, and with it are gone Craft and Purity, for Walter, the sun of our land, has fled, and with him has departed Hildegund, the light of my old age.'

The heart of Etzel swelled with rage and grief, as he rent his clothes and beat his breast; and his face betrayed the heaving of his soul within him, like the billows on a stormy sea. All that day he neither ate nor drank, and when night threw her shadow over the earth, he sank wearily on his bed. But sleep came not

to his eyes; and many a time he sat up on his couch like one astonished, as thought after thought of sorrow and anger hurried through his mind. At last the morning came; and the king gathered his chiefs in council. 'Bring me,' he said, 'chained and muzzled the Gothic dog which has run away, and I will give to the man who does me this service gold so deep that he may stand in it as a stake may stand in the corn.' But brave and strong though his warriors were, yet none dared venture to match himself in single fight with the son of Alphar. For them life was better than gold, and none stirred from his place. Thus it came to pass that Walter journeyed on in peace with Hildegund, by night on the open road, by day through the dim forests, until they had seen the sun forty times journey across the wide heaven, and twice beheld the full orb of the moon shed its soft light over hills and streams and valleys.

Then beneath them they saw the green waters of the Rhine, and the towers of Worms in the far distance. To the ferryman who carried them across Walter gave not money but fish from his net, and leaving him, he wandered on with Hildegund by the light of the moon. But when the morning came the old ferryman hastened to the palace of King Gunther to sell the fish which Walter had given him. 'Whence came these fish?' asked the king; 'the Rhine never had them in its waters.' Then the ferryman told his story, how yestereve there came to his ferry a warrior clad from head to heel in bright steel armour, with a shield on his left hand and a spear in his right, while close behind him came a maiden leading his warhorse. 'The steed was laden with two chests,' he said, 'and, I take it, they were not empty. When the horse shook them as he moved, there was a sound within, mightily like the rattling of jewels and gold. This knight gave me the fish for the fare across the Rhine.' 'It is Walter my comrade,' said Hagen, as he heard the old

man's words; 'he is coming back from the land of the Huns.' 'Rejoice, my brave warriors,' shouted Gunther, so that the hall-roof rang; 'the gods are bringing to us again the treasure which King Gibich yielded up to Etzel.' Then at his bidding his war-steed was saddled, and twelve knights with Hagen mounted their horses to go with the king; for so great a treasure, he said, must not go out from the land. But Hagen was loth that wrong should be done to his old friend; so he told them of the might of Walter's arm, and that no man yet had been able to withstand him. But the heart of Gunther was fixed on the treasure, and he turned a deaf ear to the warnings of Hagen.

Meanwhile, the path which Walter took with Hildegund led them deep in the forest till they came to a cave so overhung by two huge rocks, that scarcely could any who passed it know that there was aught within. Glad was Walter when he spied this resting-place, for since he left the Huns' land he had not dared to do more than to lean upon his spear, and his limbs were now sorely wearied and his eyes weighed down with the sleep against which he had striven so long. So taking off his armour, he stretched himself on the ground while his head lay in the maiden's lap; and bidding her watch and wake him if she saw the dust of horsemen afar off, he fell asleep.

But Gunther had marked the tread of their feet and the point of his horse's hoofs, and he laughed in his heart as he charged his warriors to make haste, for the Goth and his hoard would soon be taken. 'Nay, O king,' said Hagen, 'be warned in time. Walter is no child. Hadst thou seen him but once in the fight, thou wouldst have known that this fox is not easily trapped. Many a time have I trod the same path with him, and never have I known him leave a foe alive.' But Gunther spurred his horse, and rode on the more eagerly.

From the cave Hildegund saw the cloud of dust raised

by the horsemen, and she woke Walter with a kiss. 'Why may I not sleep?' he asked, raising his head. 'There,' she answered, 'along the wood comes a troop of horsemen.' Straightway Walter shook the sleep from his eyes, and clothing himself in his burnished armour, stood at the entering in of the cave. But Hildegund trembled as Gunther and his men pressed on. 'They are the Huns,' she said; 'have pity on me and slay me. If I may not be thy wife, let none other lay hands upon me.' Then with a smile Walter pressed her to his side, as he said, 'My sword longs not for blood so dear to me as thine; it shall bathe in the life-stream of my foes. So be of good cheer, Hildegund. The weapon which has aided me thus far will help me yet again. Nay,' he added, as the horsemen drew nearer, 'these are not Huns. They are the Niflungs of Frank-land, and with them comes my comrade Hagen.' Then placing himself at the mouth of the cave, he charged Hildegund to be of good cheer, 'for not a Frank,' he said, 'shall ever say to his bride, that he has won without a blow the golden hoard of Walter.'

There, as Hagen saw the goodly form of Walter, he turned once more to Gunther. 'Be not mad,' he said, 'nor send thy knights to their death. It may be that he will peacefully yield his treasures, if thou wilt send a herald to him, when he knows it is the king who claims them.' This time Gunther followed his counsel, and the high steward Gamelo of Metz was sent to ask Walter whence he had come and whither he was going. 'Comest thou of thyself,' asked Walter, 'or at the bidding of another?' 'Yea,' said Gamelo, 'I come at the bidding of the king, who will know wherefore thou rovest through his land.' 'Strange dealing is this,' answered Walter, 'to tease strangers with curious questions. But if he will know, go tell him that I am Walter the son of Alphar; that while I was yet a child I was sent as a hostage

into the Huns' land; that through longing for the land of my fathers I have broken my fetters, and that I am going home.' 'Be it so,' said Gamelo; 'but first thou must yield up to the king thy horse and the burden which it carries, and the maiden with them; and in requital, he will spare thee thy limbs and thy life.' 'Thy beard is grey, old man,' answered Walter, 'but thou speakest as a very child. Will thy master sell the bear's skin before he has caught the bear? But tell him, nevertheless, that if he will let me go in peace, he shall have from my hoard a hundred bracelets of gold.' 'The word is good,' cried Hagen; 'the jewels which his steed bears are right goodly. Take them and let him go, for my dreams tell me that there is storm and mischief in the air. I have seen in my vision a wild boar fighting with thee, and twice it bit thee to the very bone, and as I hastened to thy aid, it tore out my right eye with its tusk.' 'Good,' said Gunther; 'thou followest in the ways of thy father, with his faint heart and fine words to hide it.' Full of rage was Hagen, but he curbed his fury, and said only, 'There stands Walter; go and fight him man to man. I will wait and see the issue.' So going to a hillock hard by, he sat down on his shield to see the battle. Then Gunther laughed with bitter scorn. 'The sermon is over,' he said, 'and the dance may begin with fiddle and shawm.' Straightway, clad in his iron garb, Gamelo called out to Walter: 'Hear, son of Alphar; yield up all thy treasure to the king of the Franks, or thy life shall pay the forfeit.' But Walter held his peace, and suffered the old man to ride up nearer and bid him again yield up the hoard and the maiden. Then strode Walter from the mouth of the cave, and said, 'Why dost thou come hither, crying like a maddened hound? Am I a thief, that Gunther asks me to yield up that which is in my hands? Has he lent me money on pawned goods that he seeks such usury? Do his people

so hate all strangers as to let none pass through the land without paying toll for the road? Two hundred bracelets I am ready to yield to him; do ye yet grudge it to me that I should make my journey in peace?'

Wise were the words of Walter, and a fool was he who threw away his counsel. 'Thou bargainest not like a Goth but like a Jew,' said Gamelo: 'not three hundred bracelets, but thy whole treasure will I have, and with that for my prize I bid thee now to join me in the dance.' So with a jest went Gamelo to his death, for Walter swerved aside from the spear which the old man threw, and the weapon was buried harmlessly in the earth. Then quick as thought, Walter's spear pierced Gamelo's shield, and his sword smote off his right hand. Mad with fear, his horse rose high in the air, and throwing its rider fell back on the earth. Twice fell the sword of Walter, and horse and man lay dead upon the ground.

Then in deep grief rose up Skaramund, whom some called Gimo, nephew of Gamelo, and said, 'The fight is now mine before all other men: I will avenge his death, or die.' With no vain-glorying he faced the son of Alphar. 'I come not to thee for thy treasure,' he said: 'I demand of thee the recompense for the life of my uncle whom thy sword has smitten.' 'What sayest thou?' asked Walter: 'had I begun the strife, then might thy sword rightfully drink my heart's blood.' Quick as lightning came two spears from Skaramund's hand: from the one Walter swerved aside, the other recoiled back from his shield. Short, though fierce, was the strife that followed, until as Skaramund turned his horse, the lance of Walter pierced him under his chin, and he fell senseless on the earth. Then in his place came Werinhard, who was famed to have like bow-craft with his forefather Pandaros of Ilion. Thick came the arrows on Walter's shield; and for a time Walter bore it peacefully; but his patience was soon pressed too far, and springing forward he said, 'Now may the dance move free,' and yet a

little while and Werinhard lay smitten by the side of Gamelo and Skaramund. After him came Eckefrit the Saxon, and threw forth words of foul scorn against Walter; but he paid the penalty of evil speaking with his life, and Walter drove his horse within his hiding-place. But the strife was not yet ended, for then as the fifth champion came Hadawart, and called to Walter, 'Cunning worm, is thy body proof against all weapons, or against all over which the curse of the runes has not been muttered?' But for all the words that he spake, and the fierce blows which he struck, Hadawart also lay soon among the dead.

Then Patafrit, the son of Hagen's sister, thought to avenge on Walter the death of the knights who had fallen, and the tears rushed into Hagen's eyes as he saw his nephew going madly to his doom. 'Art thou mad and blind?' he said. 'Surely the shadow of the Norns is on thee, and the sands of thy life are fast running out. O lust of gold, O cursed hunger, that grows keener as the feast goes on! Who shall dry the tears which the longing for thee draws forth? Who shall cherish a wife, who has first bound himself to thee? Farewell, farewell,' he cried, as the young man passed on; and the mourning of Hagen struck on Walter's ears as he kept watch at Waschenstein. The sorrow of his friend filled his own eyes with tears, as he cried to Patafrit, 'Spare thyself, brave youth, and live for glorious deeds hereafter.' 'Why takest thou heed of my life? My business is with deeds, not words,' answered Patafrit, as he hurled his lance at Walter, who parried it with his spear and sent it like a feather through the air, till it fell at the feet of Hildegund. With a cry of fear she sank fainting to the ground; but when her breath came to her again, and raising her eyes she saw that Walter was still unhurt, the life-blood once more coursed warmly through her veins. Twice yet or thrice Patafrit essayed to smite Walter, in spite of

warnings, until, as he was bringing down his sword upon him, Walter bowed beneath his shield, and Patafrit was borne with his face to the earth. Once more he rose, and rushed with his sword against his enemy; but the wrath of Walter was now awakened, and with a single stroke he dashed Patafrit lifeless to the ground.

More fearful was the combat with Gerwich, the seventh of the Niflung champions. Not a word was spoken as the play of weapons went on, and fearfully the battle-axe of Gerwich came whirling through the air. But vain were his strivings. Neither eye nor arm failed Walter, who, biding his time, thrust his spear into his side: and Gerwich's eyes grew dim in death.

Through marrow and bone the Franks shivered, as they saw his life-blood streaming from the wound, and one and all warned the king that the fight had gone on long enough. But Gunther's eyes were blind with rage. 'Noble warriors,' he cried, 'this fear does you shame. Think of vengeance, not of flight. Our names are soiled for ever, if we go back discomfited from Waschenstein. How will the noble ladies welcome us at Worms? How will the people look on us who are their champions? And is the Goth to triumph at our cost? I had rather die a thousand deaths than look upon such foul disgrace. We came for gold and treasure; but now our prize must be blood. Death only can atone for death; and vengeance calls us on, till the man who fails to win it rests with the dead.'

Again was the fierce flame kindled in their hearts by the words of Gunther, and they hastened to the fight as men may hasten to their sports. Room was there for two to fight before the wall of rock at Waschenstein; but Walter was taken at unawares, for when the Franks fell back, he took off his helmet and hung it on a bush, that he might rest awhile from the fearful heat of the battle. With reins hanging loose from his horse's neck, Randolf

came hurrying before all the other knights, and with his mighty ashen spear headed with iron he smote at the heart of the Basque warrior; and had not Wayland done his work well when he wrought the coat of mail, Walter's days had then been ended. For the first time the sport seemed to him grim and dark, and his cheek was deadly pale. He could not get his helmet, for Randolf stood in the way; and now his enemy seizing his sword shore off two locks of hair from his head, which lay bare to every blow. But when Randolf brought it down with another stroke, the weapon stuck in the wood of Walter's shield. Quick as lightning, Walter drew in his shield, and Randolf was hurled from his seat. 'My locks of hair shall cost thee thy head,' said Walter, as he dealt him the stroke of death.

Then the Niflung knights bethought them of a new device, and Helmnot hurried forward with a grappling-iron fixed to a triple-corded rope, which his comrades carried, that, so soon as the iron should fix itself on Walter's shield, they might pull the rope with all their strength, and if so be, drag down Walter himself on the earth. Great would be their glory, if they could take him prisoner alive. Fiercely Helmnot hurled the iron, as he cried, 'Bald head, this grapnel brings thee thy doom:' and with a terrible hiss the hook bit into the wood of the shield. With a cry which made the forest ring, the Frankish warriors gave vent to their joy: and Gunther himself tugged at the grapnel sturdily. But vain was all their striving. Walter stood firm as the world-tree Yggdrasil, while three knights, Helmnot, Drogo, and Tannenast, sought with the king to conquer a single man. Then was the wrath of Walter kindled once more, and shieldless as he was and helmless, he strode forward and with one blow dashed out Helmnot's brains; but as he raised his hand to smite Drogo, the knight of Strasburg turned to fly. Entangled by the grappling-iron,

he struggled to set himself free: but before he could do so, Walter smote him on the leg, and reaching forward grasped his shield. In furious rage Drogo espied a huge stone, which he hurled down on Walter, shattering the shield which Walter had taken from him; but though Tannenast came to his aid, both were smitten down by the son of Alphar.

So were ten of the bravest champions of the Niflungs overthrown: and now King Gunther betook himself to Hagen whose warnings and prayers he had despised. But when he sought to appease him, Hagen answered angrily, 'Nay, why dost thou come to me? Am I not one from whom coldness of blood takes away all strength and courage in the battle-field? Do I not follow in the trembling and womanly ways of my father? And was not my counsel to thee nothing worth, so long as thou hadst thy brave warriors in whom thou mightest place thy trust?' 'Nay,' said Gunther, 'think not of the wrong that I have done to thee: think rather on our comrades who lie here before our eyes, stiff and cold. Grievous is it that we have given cause for any to say, "Look on the Frankish knights whom a stranger slew at Waschenstein, one fighting against twelve." And even as Gunther pleaded, he saw that Hagen's mind was shaken, and he knelt before him, the king at his vassal's knee, while the tears streamed from his eyes. Then the wrath of Hagen melted away like ice before the summer sun. 'Rise up, my lord and king,' he said: 'it is not seemly that thou shouldest kneel to me, thy knight and servant. Thine is my life and all that I have, and thy will shall be obeyed. But two things have I to say. Not for my nephew's sake would I have sought to take revenge on Walter. His blood was on his own head. Nor will I dare to assail Walter in his stronghold. Victims enough, who have essayed this task, lie slaughtered before me. So long as he abides behind his

walls of rock, not a hair of his head shall ever be hurt by us, though the whole host of the Franks were to dash themselves against the bulwarks. Better far to suffer him to go his way quietly, and to lay an ambush for him on his path.'

Right glad was Gunther to have this counsel, and falling on Hagen's neck, he kissed him. Then they took their way through the forest, as the sun went down beneath the waters of the western sea and the moon rose up into the heaven. Presently Walter stood on the rocky ledge, looking keenly round to see whether his enemies were in truth gone. All was still, and Walter pondered within himself whether he should hasten away to the Basque-land while it was yet night, or wait till the morning should dawn. One thing alone seemed to him a sign of evil to come. What meant that kiss which Gunther gave to Hagen? That it meant harm he knew well: but whether they would come again with a fresh host, or lie in wait for him in secret, he could not say. Yet more he thought of all the perils of darkness, if he now left his stronghold with Hildegund; and so thinking he said boldly, 'Come what may, here I tarry, till the sun laughs in the heavens again. Gunther shall never say that I fled from the land of the Franks like a thief in the night.' So saying, he bound to the willow trees the six horses remaining from those which the slain knights had ridden, for two were dead, and Gunther and Hagen had taken the other three; and when he had placed a rampart of stakes and branches around his stronghold, he ate and drank with Hildegund, and having bidden her watch during the dark hours, he fell asleep.

Joyously the maiden kept her trust, glad at heart that Walter had come unhurt from the fearful battle. It was indeed sweet to keep guard over the sleep of such a bride-groom. The ravening wolf might cry in the wood, the roaring of the bear might be heard in the depths of the

forest: but she was safe while Walter was nigh. So she kept watch, singing many a song which she had learnt in Etzel's house, telling of the deeds of mighty heroes, and of the glorious acts of Walter himself; and as she sang, the thought would come again and again, 'Am I worthy to be his bride?' but then she remembered that she was sprung from the stock of the mighty Sigurd, the Volsung, and she called to mind his fight with the dragon of the glistening heath, and the rescuing of Brynhild, and the slaying of Regin. So thinking, she wrapped herself up in her joy, and in a soft and lulling tone she sang songs of love which fell soothingly on Walter's ear as he lay slumbering peacefully before her. But long before the first streak of dawn tinged the eastern sky, Walter rose from his sleep, and bidding Hildegund rest, looked out eagerly for the morning light. At length the darkness was scattered, and he made ready for the journey. Four horses he led, himself riding on the fifth, while Hildegund rode on the sixth; but even as they left the wall of rock, he looked yet again, and listened for sight or sound of his foes. All was still as it had been, and with Hildegund and the treasure he took once more the way that led to the land of the Basques.

But the maiden's heart was filled with strange forebodings; and they had scarcely gone a league when looking back she saw the forms of two horsemen as they came from behind a neighbouring hill, riding with hot speed towards them. 'See, Walter,' she cried, as she well-nigh fainted for fear, 'yonder come our enemies.' 'Yea, I see,' answered Walter. 'It is Hagen who is playing me this trick. He would pluck from my head, I well know, the wreath which I have scarcely woven; but be not down-hearted. The peril is not great, if we measure it by that which we had to face yesterday. Do thou take the good steed that bears our treasure chests, and tarry

with him in the thickest covert that thou canst find, while I give these men my greetings.'

Scarcely had Walter slung his shield on his arm and put his lance in rest when the voice of Gunther was heard uttering words of foul reviling. 'Ha! venomous dog, hast thou slunk away from thy lair, and dost thou now show thy teeth like a wolf tracked by the hunter to his den? So we have caught thee at last in the open field, and now we shall see if the end of thy work fits on to its beginning.' Not a word spake Walter to Gunther, for all this foul speech: but to Hagen he turned and said gently: 'Stay, I have somewhat to say to thee. What has thus suddenly changed my friend into an enemy? Canst thou not call to mind the days when the thought of parting from me was bitter to thee? Many a hope have I built on thee, and those hopes are all a cheat, if thou seekest to do me to death who have done thee no wrong. How many a time, in the hours of need and anguish since we left the Huns' land, have I trusted in thee my ancient comrade! How often have I said to Hildegund, "Let me but reach the banks of the Rhine, and I bid farewell to fear. If Hagen lives, no one shall hurt a hair of our heads. He well knows that we are journeying homeward, and this only I fear, that he may seek to keep me too long under his roof, before he send us away laden with the gifts of his princely bounty, or go with us himself until we reach the march of Spain." Thus often, as I spake of thee to Hildegund, the thought of thee chased away our care and sorrow; and must all the ancient friendship of the days when we were one heart and one soul go for nothing? My love for thee knew no bounds: yea, looking on thy face, I forgot even my father's house: and is it for this that thou huntest me fiercely from thy heart? O Hagen, if thou hast sworn an oath to Gunther against me, forswear it righteously, and as a weregild for the men who have

been slain, I will yield thee gladly a shield full of golden bracelets.'

But Hagen could not look Walter boldly in the face as he made answer, for his rough words hid the true meaning of his heart, 'Nay, Walter,' he said, 'it is thou who doest the wrong. Thy words sound fair; but thou art the breaker of our troth. Has not thy sword slain my comrades who lie slaughtered at Waschenstein? Yet had I pardoned thee in this, hadst thou not done a worse deed, when thou didst slay my sister's son in the flush of his early youth, like an opening flower mowed down by the scythe of the reaper.' Straightway Hagen leaped into his saddle, and Gunther did the like, and the warriors stood face to face for the deadly strife. Swift from Hagen's hand sped the lance against Walter's shield, but, glancing off, the weapon was buried to the shaft in the earth. Less swift sped the spear of Gunther, and scarce hitting the shield-rim, sank lazily into the sand. For a moment the Niflung warriors looked fixedly at each other, then drawing each his sword, moved again towards the son of Alphar. But naught could they do against him, and in his folly Gunther sware that he would get back his spear which lay at Walter's feet. 'Give heed, Hagen,' he said, 'and keep him off me, if thou canst, till I seize the lance.' Quickly thrusting his sword into its sheath, the king grasped the spear-shaft; but pushing Hagen back with his lance, Walter sprang on Gunther, and would have dealt him his death-blow, had not Hagen covered him with his shield. In that moment the king regained his spear, and the game of blood went on again more fiercely till, weary with heat and toil and watching, Walter cried to Hagen, 'Why do we thus tourney here all day? Well I know that thy limbs are full of might: make trial of thy strength with me, and let us close together.' So speaking, he hurled his spear and smote Hagen on the side: but the steel of his corslet

so guarded him that the wound was but slight. Tarrying not a moment, Walter drew his sword, and rushing on Gunther dealt a fearful stroke against his leg, and the king's right foot was hurled far away into the bushes. Deadly pale turned Hagen, as he saw Gunther fall, but he hastened to parry with his own body the death-stroke from the sword which gleamed in Walter's hand. Down it came on Hagen's helmet; but so firmly was it welded that its blade was shivered into bits. Forgetting himself for a moment, Walter raised his arm to hurl away the haft, when Hagen smote off the hand which in a thousand battles no man had ever been able to withstand. But heeding not the fierce pain or the blood which streamed from the stump, Walter thrust his right arm into the handle of the shield, and drawing his short Hunnish sword from his left side, smote Hagen fiercely on his face. Right well the weapon did its work. Cloven to the teeth was Hagen's cheek, and his right eye lay bleeding on the earth. Thus were the treasures shared which Walter brought from the Hun's land, and thus was the strife ended between them, for only for Gunther's sake had Hagen fought with Walter.

III. THE WEDDING OF WALTER AND HILDEGUND IN THE BASQUELAND.

Then at Walter's bidding came Hildegund, and gently and cunningly she tended their wounds; but weak though they were in strength, yet neither to Hagen nor Walter did heart or courage fail, and each could jest at the other for his plight without anger or evil will. 'Bring hither the goblet, Hildegund,' said Walter, 'and give it first to Hagen, then to me, and last to Gunther, for Hagen, if he be weak in his troth, hath borne himself right warriorly, but Gunther's arm has been slack and his blows without

weight.' 'Nay,' said Hagen, 'I deserve not to drink first. Give the cup to thy betrothed. He is peerless among all heroes.' So passed between them the merry jest, and Hagen greeted Walter by the name of the sword-god Zio, who left his right hand in the mouth of the wolf Fenrir, while Walter bade Hagen make ready for the welcome which the men of Worms should give to Wodan who left his eye in pledge at the well of Mimir. So was the old love renewed between them, and when the time of parting was come, Hagen said, 'I may not now go home with thee, but I will send one with thee who shall guard thee well, even Volker whose harping none may withstand, and who knows all the paths of the land and the sea.' Then they parted, Hagen to go with Gunther to Worms, and Walter to journey on to Basqueland; and when the next morning dawned, Volker came with many a brave knight to guide the son of Alphar to his home. So was he guarded from the wrath of Ortwine, the heir of Gamelo; and they went on safely to the march of Spain, whence Walter sent two men to tell Alphar that his son was coming home. Full of joy was the old man, and right glad were all when they heard the tidings. 'Why tarry we?' said Alphar. 'If any would have my thanks, let him come with me to greet the hostage-children.'

Eagerly the warriors went forth, and with them came many a fair maiden whom Hilda the queen sent with gifts of snow-white raiment for Walter's bride. Along the road as they passed, the greetings of the people rose long and loud in the air; and all, as their eyes rested on Hildegund, thought that never had so fair a face been seen in Basqueland. Then cried Alphar in the ears of all the people, 'The crown has long weighed too heavy on my head. Let Walter wear it now;' and the shout of 'Walter our king' was echoed over hill and vale. Joyous was the banquet of that day, but the guests spake of a day still more joyous when Hildegund should become

the wife of Walter: and near and far went the messengers to those who should be bidden to that high festival. To the Burgundian land they went, and the heart of King Herrich was made glad that his child had been brought from the house of Etzel and that she should share the throne and kingdom of Walter. From Worms were bidden King Gunther and Hagen, and with them again came the sweet harper Volker; and to Kiel went other messengers to bid Etzel himself to the marriage, and others to Lombardy to summon Hildebrand and Dietrich. Thus were Walter and Hildegund wedded, and the oath was brought to pass which Alphar and Herrich had sworn, before King Etzel with his Huns rushed like a whirlwind from the land of the rising sun.

THE STORY OF HUGDIETRICH AND HILDEBURG.

GREAT in name and power, and rich in all things that make men wealthy, King Antzius ruled over the Greeks in Constantinople; but for all his splendour and might his heart was full of care, for the cold touch of death was upon him and he knew that he must soon die. So he spake with his trusty friend, Duke Berchtung of Meran, and said, 'Loyal and true comrade, few hours remain to me here. When I am gone, be thou a father to my child Hugdietrich.' 'Of a surety I will,' answered Berchtung; 'but for many a long day may thine heart be gladdened with the sight of his fair face and his glistening eyes and the golden locks which stream in glory over his shoulders.' 'Nay,' said the king, 'it may not be:' and it came to pass even as he had said, and the child remained in the keeping of Berchtung.

Twelve summers had well-nigh passed over his head, when Hugdietrich spake to his master, 'Give me thy counsel in a weighty matter, and bring it to a good issue. My mind is set to win me a wife. I have honour and power and a wide realm: if I die, whose shall be this heritage?' 'In many a land have I sojourned both far and near,' answered Berchtung, half smiling, 'but never a maiden have I seen who may be a fit bride for thee.'

Then throughout his kingdom Hugdietrich sent messengers to summon all his knights to meet him: and when they were come together, the king put to them the same question. But all answered, 'The counsel must

come from thy master;' and turning again to Berchtung, the king besought his aid in the matter. Then said Berchtung, 'In Saloniki dwells King Walgund with his fair wife Liebgart: but fairer far is his daughter Hildeburg, and of all earthly maidens there is none other whom I deem worthy to wed with thee. But her face no man may see. High up in a lone tower the maiden lives among her women, for her father has sworn that no man shall make her his wife, and though a kaiser himself should ask for her, he would say him nay. All day long the watchman walks the battlements to spy out any who may draw near to the tower: and all through the night the warder paces round her chamber. To what purpose then do I tell thee this? With all thy might and for all thy wealth thou mayest never win her.' 'Be not too sure of this,' said the king: 'only give me thine aid, by the troth which thou hast pledged to my father and to me. My heart is fixed upon this maiden: wherefore hearken to me. I will learn to spin and sew, and broider with silk and gold. Seek me out then the best mistress throughout all the Greek-land, who may make me right cunning in all the arts of women. If I may not ask for the maiden openly, I must win her by craft.' Even so they sought him out the best mistress, and while twelve moons went round Hugdietrich learnt his lesson at her side, clad in woman's garb, with his hair streaming over his snow white shoulders. Then, when the year was ended, he spake again with Berchtung, and said, 'Tell me now, dear friend, in what guise I should go to Saloniki:' and Berchtung said, 'Fifty bold knights shalt thou take with thee, four hundred squires, and six and thirty maidens clad in rich attire. Take with thee also thy richest tent, and when thou comest near the town of Salneck, bid them set it up on the plain, and then sit on thy throne, with thy maidens and horsemen round thee; and so soon as King Walgund sends to ask the reason of

thy coming, say, "I am a princess from Constantinople; and my brother Hugdietrich has driven me away because I would not at his will wed with an unbaptised heathen. Let me then tarry with thee till my brother's wrath shall have passed away."'

Right glad was Hugdietrich at Berchtung's counsel: and with the knights and squires and maidens he drew near on the eighteenth day to the town of Salneck. Brightly gleamed his jewelled tent on the plain, and brightly flashed the jewels on his throne, when the knight Herdeger, the messenger of Walgund, stood before Hugdietrich and asked him wherefore he had come into the land. Then Hugdietrich told the tale which Berchtung had devised; and Herdeger hastened back to his master with the answer. 'Of a truth, a fairer and a more royal woman I have never seen,' he said: 'greet her then, as it beseems thee, with a royal welcome.' Quickly Walgund went forth from his halls to welcome the noble lady; but when he reached the tent, Hugdietrich knelt at his feet. 'Here let me tarry for a while,' he said; 'and well I know that my brother himself shall thank thee, when he learns, as learn he must, that I have done wisely in withstanding his will.' 'Nay, kneel not to me, fair queen,' said Walgund; 'I am not worthy the honour, but thou with all thy people shalt have all that my land may give thee.' 'Here must I sojourn alone,' answered Hugdietrich, 'for I have pledged my word to Duke Berchtung that all who came with me shall return straightway to the Greek land.'

So Hugdietrich remained alone, and Walgund led him to his castle, where Liebgart the queen welcomed him tenderly, and asked him his name. 'My name,' he said, 'is Hildegund.' Thenceforth Hildegund dwelt in the queen's chamber, broidering with threads of silk and gold the forms of men and birds and beasts, of fruits and flowers: and all that she broidered seemed to have life

upon the canvas. 'Of a truth thou sewest deftly,' said Liebgart the queen; 'thou must teach thine art to two of my best handmaidens.' 'Right gladly,' said Hildegund: and for six months she wrought with them a great work, on which were seen the birds of the air, from the nightingale to the eagle, and in one part noble knights were chasing the stag, in another they were hunting the boar. 'It is a marvellous work,' said King Walgund, as he chanced to see it; 'whose hands have wrought it?' And he marvelled when he knew that the broidering was Hildegund's. Swiftly sped yet again the maiden's fingers, and this time she broidered a crown for the king, glistening with gold and gems like the rays of the sun at noontide. 'Now, by my troth, it is a right royal gift,' he said, 'but I will not leave thee the conqueror. Ask what thou wilt—houses, lands, or people; all shall be thine.' 'Shall it be so in very truth?' asked Hildegund. 'In very truth it shall be, fair maiden,' answered King Walgund. 'Then let thy child come to me from her tower,' said Hildegund: 'I ask no other reward, for I would not abide here longer alone.' Even so did the king as he had pledged his word; and Hildeburg was brought from her tower to greet the stranger who had fled from Constantinople because of the wrath of Hugdietrich. With kindly warmth she raised Hildegund as she sought to kneel before her. 'Nay, thou must be as my sister,' she said, as she placed Hildegund on a seat beside her, and hand in hand the maidens looked lovingly at each other, as they quaffed golden wine in token of welcome. 'Thou must learn her craft, dear child,' whispered King Walgund in his daughter's ear: 'for my oath must be kept, and thou must go back to thy tower with Hildegund.'

Hugdietrich's heart leaped wildly with joy, as the warder shut the two maidens within the tower, for none might come near them, and their food was passed into

them from a window. But the days wore on, and the weeks, and the secret was hidden still; and at last Hildegund's cheek grew pale and her eye dim, because the longing of love tormented her as with hunger. 'Dear friend, what saddens thee?' asked Hildeburg; 'hide not aught from me.' 'Then betray me not,' said Hildegund. 'I am Hugdietrich the king of Constantinople. Much toil have I gone through for thy sake, fair maiden, and far more yet am I ready to endure: but my wife thou must be, and at Constantinople thou must sit by my side, my crowned queen.'

The heart of Hildeburg beat quickly with joy and fear. 'If my father knows this, we die,' she said. 'But he needs not to know it,' answered Hugdietrich. So they abode on together, and the days and weeks wore on joyously, until Hildeburg said, 'I fear me the happy time is coming to an end for us both. I am a mother; and as we cannot flee away, the doom must come upon us.' 'Nay, sweet love, wherefore should it come? Our life is in the hands of God; and He who has given thee to me will guard and bless us.'

When, next, the Queen Liebgart came to see her child, they went together to the battlements of the tower, and thence on the plain they saw the white tents of a great army. 'I know them well,' said Hildegund; 'they are the people of my land, and Duke Berchtung has come to tell me that my brother is no longer wroth with me, and to take me away.' 'Say not so, dear friend,' answered Hildeburg, 'the joy of my life is gone, if thou forsakest me.' 'Nay rather,' said Hugdietrich, 'thou wouldest rejoice if after so long an exile thy friends came to take thee home.' So spake they while the queen was nigh; but in the night, when none else was near, Hugdietrich spake with his love, and bade her give good heed to his words. 'Let the watchmen and the warder take our child to the church, and see it be baptised. If it be a boy, let him be

named Dietrich; if it be a daughter, let them give it what name thou mayest choose; and yet more, so soon as thou canst, come thou with the warder and the watchman, with the nurse and the child, to the Greek land, and all shall be well.'

Then, hurrying away to the warder, Hildegund besought his aid in a weighty matter. 'Only give me thy troth that thou wilt guard the secret well.' 'Maiden, it shall never pass my lips,' said the warder. But when he received the charge about the babe, he wondered much and said, 'What wouldest thou say, maiden? How can this be when I have so kept guard that no man has ever come near this tower? If King Walgund knew this he would hang me on these battlements before an hour could go by.' 'Nevertheless, it is as I say,' said Hildegund. 'I am Hugdietrich the king of Constantinople, and to me Hildeburg has given her love. This is the secret which thou must keep; and when thou comest to the Greek land, bringing with thee Hildeburg and her child, I will give thee a thousand golden marks with goodly honours and broad lands.'

In the morning came the Duke Berchtung, and asked of King Walgund, when he rode forth to meet him, 'Where is the princess whom I brought to thee from the Greek land? Her brother is wroth with her no more, and I am come to take her home.' 'She is with my child Hildeburg,' answered Walgund; and sorely did Hildeburg's heart misgive her when the hour for parting with Hugdietrich had come. But as Berchtung took Hugdietrich in his arms in the joy of welcome, Hugdietrich whispered in his ear, 'Dear friend, I have wooed and won the maiden; and now leave me not here, for if I tarry longer we are both doomed.' Then said Walgund, 'Abide with us yet, Hildegund, and broad lands will I give thee, with knights and maidens and all that thou mayest desire.' 'It may not be,' said Hilde-

gund; 'my brother is no longer wroth with me. I pray thee, let me go home.' And taking from his hand a golden ring, he placed it on Hildeburg's finger, and said, 'Wear this for my sake, and be true to me always.' In his turn Walgund bade his men bring a beautiful robe, red with gold, and besought Hildegund to wear it for his sake. So Hugdietrich departed to his own land, and there he dwelt as days and weeks went on, and the longing for Hildeburg pressed on him more and more.

In the meanwhile Hildeburg lay within her lonely tower, and there her child was born; and between his shoulders she saw a red crosslet, by which she must know him evermore. But no long time after this, Queen Liebgart came to talk with her child; and the warder said to Hildeburg, 'Thy mother is come. What are we to do with thy child? If the queen knew of its birth our hours on earth would be numbered. Where may we hide him?' 'Nay, it is for thee to give counsel,' said Hildeburg. 'Well, then, I see a way,' he said; 'we will let him down by a rope over the wall, so that he may lie safely among the bushes.'

Presently came Liebgart the queen: and when she saw Hildeburg lying pale and death-like on the bed, and asked her what ailed her, the maiden said, 'I scarcely know. I know only that I was well-nigh dead, and that now my life is come back to me.' Gently did Liebgart tend her, giving her all nourishing food and drink; but for all her mother's kindness the maiden lay fretting on her bed, for she yearned to know where her child might be. So soon as the queen was gone, Hildeburg rose up and hastened to the moat below the tower, and everywhere she sought but nowhere could she find the child, for a wolf had passed by the bushes where the babe lay and had carried it away to her lair. The warder peered through thicket and brake, but he pried about in vain: and when the maiden came to him pale as the dead for

very fear and asked him for her child, he looked at her face and thought within himself, 'Surely she will die if I tell her that I know not where he is.' So he said, 'He is well, lady: we have baptised the babe, and he lies in the watchman's house.'

King Walgund was hunting in the castle woods, and spying the wolf which had borne the child away, he chased the beast to its lair, but the huntsmen had a heavy task before they could pierce through the thicket where the wolf and her whelps were hidden. When at last they got to the den, there lay the babe, and one of the huntsmen hurried with it to the king. 'A fairer child have I never seen,' he said: and all cried, 'It is but newly born.' Then the king bade them search the wood and see if they could find the mother, if perchance the wolf had not torn her: but no one could they see; and taking the babe in his arms, for to none else would he yield it, Walgund hastened to Salneck, and hurrying into Liebgart's chamber he cried, 'See here the child which I have found in a wolf's lair: it is but newly born and has not yet been baptised.' So they bare the child to the priests, and named him Dietrich; but men called him Wolfdietrich because he had been found in the wolf's den.

When next Queen Liebgart went to the tower, she told to Hildeburg the story of the babe and the wolf, and Hildeburg's heart beat wildly as she asked, 'Mother, whose child may it be?' 'Nay, I know not,' said the queen. Then as soon as she was left alone, the maiden hastened to the warder: 'Tell me truly, friend, how fares my child?' 'It fares well,' said the warder: but Hildeburg felt a strange fear, and she besought him for the truth's sake to tell her where the babe might be. Then said the warder, 'Forgive me, dear lady: but I spake for thy good, lest the grief of the tidings might take away thy life. Everywhere I sought for the babe, but nowhere

could I find it.' Then Hildeburg's grief burst out in a great cry. 'Ah me, that ever I was born: cursed be the hour in which I lost my babe, and my lord Hugdietrich.' 'Weep not thus, dear lady,' said the warder, for no longer could he bear to look upon her agony: 'weep not. Thy father has found the babe: but I feared to tell thee, lest his wrath should be kindled against thee. If thou doubtest my word now, pray thy mother the queen to bring the child that thou mayest see it, and then shalt thou know that my words are true.'

Then went the maiden to her mother and said, 'Let me see this child which has come from the wolf's den.' But the queen answered, 'So dear is it to thy father that he will scarce let it be out of his sight: nevertheless to-morrow in the morning the nurse shall bring it to thee.' And even so it came to pass that when the morning came and the nurse bare the child to the tower, Hildeburg looked between its shoulders and there lay the mark of the rosy cross, and the maiden clasped the babe to her breast. Presently she sat by Liebgart's side, and said gently, 'May I tell thee, mother, of the things which have befallen me?' 'Surely mayest thou, my child,' said the queen: 'thy words are sacred in my keeping.' 'Mother,' answered Hildeburg, 'the child is mine;' and when she told how the child had been placed in the thicket and how the wolf had borne it away, Liebgart asked, 'Daughter, who is the father of thy babe?' 'That can I tell thee, mother,' said Hildeburg eagerly: 'thou knowest the fair Hildegund who came from Constantinople and taught me so deftly to broider. That maiden was Hugdietrich, the Greek king. He is the father of my child; and now, mother, take it for the best, for otherwise than it is, it may not be. Only give me thy counsel, how I may fare hence into the Greek land.'

That night, as Liebgart talked with Walgund, she asked him, 'What should a man do with that which may

not be undone?' 'That must he leave alone,' said the king, 'if he be wise.' 'Is thy word sure?' asked Liebgart. 'Yea,' said Walgund; 'thou knowest that I never break it.' 'Dear lord,' said Liebgart, 'the babe whom thou didst save from the wolf's den is Hildeburg's child: and I can tell thee who is his father. The maiden Hildegund whom thou didst send to teach our daughter to broider is Hugdietrich, the king of the Greeks; and now thou must take it for the best, for otherwise than it is, it may not be. Only bid Hugdietrich come hither, and gold and lands shall he have for his wife's dower.'

Stoutly King Walgund struggled with his wrath; and early in the morning he hastened to the tower. 'Tell me, warder,' said the king, 'who is the father of my daughter's babe?' 'This only do I know,' answered the warder; 'thy daughter took me by the hand one day, and leading me to a window told me that the maiden Hildegund was the Kaiser Hugdietrich. And where then is my guilt, when thou didst shut a man with thy child in the tower?' 'Thou art not guilty, good friend,' said King Walgund. Then answered the warder, 'Where is now the oath which thou didst swear never to give thy child in marriage? The maiden hath found a lord herself, and must not the oath be put aside?' Then cried all, 'Yea, the oath is gone; and now send for Kaiser Dietrich that he may come to his bride and his child.' 'Be it so,' said Walgund; and right joyfully his messengers rode presently away to go to the Greek land, and bare to Hugdietrich the bidding of the king. Then they told him all that had befallen, and how his child had been called Wolfdietrich because he had been found in the wolf's lair. And straightway the Kaiser sent throughout all the land to summon his knights; and with two thousand warriors he took the by-ways to Salneck. On the eighteenth day they saw its towers, and Walgund came forth to welcome his guest. 'The warder hath spoken

truly,' said Hugdietrich; 'thou wouldest suffer no man to wed thy child: what could I do but win her by craft?' Glad at heart was Hugdietrich, when he saw his child in the nurse's arms, and took it up and kissed it: and right glad was he when Hildeburg came forth with her mother, and Hugdietrich kissed away the memory of all her sorrow.

Many a day and many a night there was joy and feasting in the halls of King Walgund, and then Hildeburg and her child went forth with Hugdietrich to go to Constantinople.

THE GUDRUN LAY.

I. HAGEN AND THE GRIFFINS.

SIGEBAND, king of Ireland, had an only son named Hagen, who grew up so hardy that at seven years of age he counted it shame to abide any longer among women-folk and children, and chose rather to handle a sword and spear with his father's men. And for all his fingers were so small that they could scarce close round a weapon, his strength and skill were wonderful, and few had ever seen the like of his sword-play.

One day King Sigeband made a feast and tournament; and after the justing and the games there came a minstrel into the hall and harped so sweetly on his harp that all the lords and ladies ran thither to hear. Queen Uta sat there beside the king; and so wondrously sweet was the song that the warders of the castle abandoned their watch, and all the king's servants, down to the very scullions, left their work and came stealing in to listen to the lay.

The boy Hagen was left alone in the garden. And suddenly there was a terrible noise in the air: a mighty griffin swooped from the sky and came crashing down through the tree-branches, seized the boy in his great talons, and soared with him up into the air. Hagen's cries broke in upon the minstrelsy; the king and queen ran out from the hall, and looking up beheld

their son in the griffin's claws. But while they yet stood watching, the griffin bore the boy high up among the clouds, and dwindled from their sight. Fast flew the monster, quicker than the wind; and Hagen, terror-stricken, looked down into the great deep beneath him. He saw the land slip by and his home grow far and faint; then they passed the coast; then on for a hundred miles aloft above the cold gray sea to a huge pile of bouldered rocks which dashed to spray the leaping waves that always roared upon them. The griffin wheeled above a pinnacle of the cliff, then hurtled swiftly down upon his nest and dropped his prey among his brood; then without lighting, skimmed the cliffs and soared again, and fled away to sea. Straightway the brood of griffins began fighting for the morsel of prey; for Hagen was in sooth no more than a morsel for the smallest of them. But one of the wisest of the young monsters, whilst the rest were tearing each other with beak and talon, took up the boy in his claws and flew off with him to a tree hard by. Howbeit the bough whereon he perched brake with his weight, so that Hagen slipped from the griffin's claws, and tumbled to the ground. The boy scrambled to his feet and crept quickly away through the crannies of the rocks and hid himself. As soon as he was got over his fright and had begun to look about, he saw that he was come into a great cleft between two sweating rock-sides, where of old the cliff had been rent asunder from beneath, and left a thread of sky above. But all below was like a garden for fern and creeping green. And as he walked along a winding pathway there, he came upon three lovely maidens who, like him, had been stolen away from home in childhood by the griffins, though by what means they had been delivered from death, save only by God's mercy, no man knows.

When these maidens saw Hagen, they ran in mortal fear and hid themselves in the cavern, thinking him

some strange creature come to do them harm. But Hagen called aloud and besought them for pity's sake to give him food, for he was famished. So divining from his manner and speech that he must be one of their own kind, the maidens came out from their concealment and gave him both meat and drink, whilst he recounted the manner of his deliverance. Then were they glad at finding that the boy was of mortal race as they were, and they took care of him. And Hagen abode with them a long time, till from a boy he grew a youth, tall and straight and large of limb.

Ten years went by, and all that while no other living soul came near the island, till one day a great storm arose. The rocks shook with the thunder of the sea, as the waves beat on them and burst in foam upon the steepest cliff tops. And a ship that chanced to pass that way was driven from its course, whirled up a great green sea-hill, and shattered like a potsherd on the rocks. Afterward, when the fury of the storm was spent, the sea yet all a-work with foam and heaving at ebb-tide, Hagen climbed down the cliffs and peering about, saw the sand strewn with corpses, and how ever and anon the griffins came and carried them off to feed their brood. He espied how one of the bodies was the corpse of a knight clad in armour, having a sword belted at the waist; and beside it there lay a bow and a quiver full of arrows. Then watching till the griffins were gone off again with their prey, he made haste and came down, stripped off the knight's armour and put it on, girt on the sword and took the bow in hand. Just then one of the griffins came hovering overhead, and Hagen let fly a shaft at him, but it bounded off the creature's hide, and fell harmless to the ground. The griffin darted on the youth, but he avoided its clutch, and turning drew his sword and with one blow smote off a wing of the monster; and when the griffin sought to tear him with his talons, Hagen cut off

his paws, and soon after slew him. Erewhile came the other griffin with all the brood, and these all beset Hagen behind and before and on all sides, insomuch that the maidens, who watched from the cliff, gave him up for lost. But his victory over the first griffin made him the more valiant, and he dealt so many blows that his sword could not be seen, but only a flash and glitter that played round about him like lightning; and before long he laid every one of the griffins dead upon the sand.

Hagen became so skilful with the bow that he could shoot a bird upon the wing, or a fish as it darted in the sea. Once as he rambled over the island he slew an unknown monster that breathed fire and smoke when it came ravening at him from a gloomy cavern. And Hagen having by chance tasted of the creature's blood felt it strengthen him. So he drank his fill thereof, and it entered into his sinews and gave him thenceforward the strength of twelve strong men; moreover his voice grew loud and terrible, so that he could make himself heard above the roar of the surf upon the rocks. Soon after, Hagen met a lion in the wood, and he lifted up his voice and shouted at him, and the lion fled in terror at the noise. But Hagen following, caught the lion alive with his hands, muzzled him, and bound up his claws with strips of bark. Then he took the beast upon his shoulders and carried him home to the cavern to make sport for the maidens.

Moreover, since Hagen had gotten the sword, he made a fire by striking sparks from the rock. Heretofore they had lived on herbs and roots, having no means of taking wild-fowl or flesh, or of cooking it when taken; but now they had both fish, flesh, and fowl in plenty, which Hagen killed with his bow, and a fire to dress it withal. And the maidens grew exceeding comely and well-favoured on their better fare. They also learned to replace their worn-out garments with kirtles woven

cunningly, after the manner of linen, from threads drawn from the soft inner bark of trees.

Month after month they looked and longed to see a ship. No ship came. They built a watch-fire on the highest peak, and kept it burning night and day through storm and sunshine; but far as one could look there was nothing save the round sea and the drooping clouds, the drooping clouds and the round heaving sea. No ship came.

One hot, bright summer day, the throbbing blue sea lay white-fringed on the yellow sands, murmuring slumbrously. The cliffs quivered in the haze of the sun. The maidens looked and saw a sail; and they ran and told Hagen; and they were all glad, for they saw the ship steer towards them.

It was a certain Yarl that sailed with his men in search of booty, and he saw the island and made for it; but when he perceived three maidens on the beach clad in strange attire, he feared to land, thinking them sea-women, till Hagen lifted up his mighty voice and told who and what they were, and asked that seemly garments for them might be sent ashore. Thereupon the Yarl chose out the best raiment to be found in the ship, and rowed therewith to land in a little boat with twelve of his men. And after the maidens had come back from behind a thicket whither they went to clothe themselves, he marvelled at their beauty, and persuaded them to go on board the ship with Hagen. There he set meat before them, and made a feast of the best that he had. And after that the Yarl would know concerning their history. So the eldest of the maidens told him that she was an Indian princess who had been carried off by the griffin; the second said that she was the daughter of the King of Portugal; and the third, that she was a noble lady of Ireland. But, when they told him who Hagen was, and how he had slain the griffins, the Yarl's heart sank within him; for

Sigeband King of Ireland, Hagen's father, was an enemy of his, and he bethought him straightway to avenge himself upon the son, yet feared the might of the man who had slain the griffins and their brood.

Hagen perceived the Yarl whispering with his men and presently caught them trying to steal away his weapons. Thereat being angered, he asked fiercely what was meant. And the Yarl spake, saying, 'I have suffered great and grievous wrongs at the hands of King Sigeband and his knights, and now, since thou art his son, thou shalt make amends to me.' Hagen answered: 'If this be true, it is no fault of mine. Nevertheless, steer thou for Ireland with me, and I trow that justice shall be done for any wrong that thou hast suffered.' The Yarl said, 'A man is a fool to go and seek justice with his enemy in his hand.' Therewith he called to his men to seize Hagen and bind him. But Hagen drew his sword and cut down everyone that came against him. He slew all the mass that fought him, until the few left alive were glad to take refuge in the far end of the ship, whence they dared not for their lives come forth. Then Hagen fell upon the Yarl, and him he would have slain likewise, but that the maidens prayed hard for his life. So he bound him hand and foot with sail-cord, and flung him in the bottom of the ship.

After this Hagen cried to the mariners, 'Come forth, you dogs! Come, bend to the oars! And if the steersman be alive, let him now steer for Ireland.' Never a man disobeyed him. They sat them down at the oar-banks and the steersman steered; and on the seventeenth day they sighted the green shores of Ireland; but the mariners feared greatly to come to land, lest King Sigebard should put them all to death. Then Hagen said, 'Fear not; for I will send you all to bear the message to my father that his son has come. Be of good cheer: kings do not slay the bearers of glad tidings.'

When the messengers came to King Sigeband he would not believe them, nor would he even let his knights go down to the sea-beach to find if the tidings were true; for he deemed it an idle tale that his son could be yet alive after being carried away by a ravenous monster of the air so many years ago. But the mariners went to Queen Uta and told her; and she believed, and went straightway to the ship and welcomed Hagen, and brought him to his father. And even then King Sigeband could scarce for joy believe that it was his very own son.

After this, Hagen released the Yarl from his bonds, and finding that he had been unjustly treated caused restitution to be made to him in full for all his losses, and made peace with him. Then Hagen took to wife the Indian princess, and after King Sigeband's death, Hagen reigned in his stead and became one of the mightiest kings of the earth. And he made noble ladies of the two other maidens whom he brought with him out of captivity, and they wedded two of his dukes.

II. HILDA'S WOOING.

When Hettel, the young king of Denmark, but newly crowned, was minded to take him a wife, he sent and gathered together his high vassals and lieges to his palace in Hegelingen to give him counsel. And Morung of Nifland said to the king: 'There is one maiden that for comeliness surpasseth all others in the world: that is Hilda, daughter of wild Hagen King of Ireland; and she is peerless.' 'That may be so,' answered the king, 'but Hagen is waxed so proud that there is no dealing with him by fair words; and many kings and yarls which sought to carry her off by strength of arm now sleep the sword-sleep because of her.' Then spake the sweet-

voiced Horant: 'Full well I know the maiden. She is radiant as the soft new snow beneath the dawn. Stern is her father, and cruel as the north wind that tears the clouds and breaks the sea, and shakes the pines in his fists. Wherefore if the king must send a messenger, let him not choose me.' Frute spake also: 'Neither am I fain to go upon this errand. But let the king send and summon Yarl Wate of Sturmen; he is more reckless than any man, and heedeth no living thing.'

But when Yarl Wate was come before the king, and understood what was required of him, he was but ill-pleased, and said: 'I ween Horant and Frute to have counselled thee in this, and to have done in no friendly wise toward me. Howbeit I am not the man to pick an enterprise that hath no peril in it. I will go. But since Horant and Frute esteem my life so lightly, they shall go likewise.' Then Yrolt of Ortland and Morung said: 'It is well-spoken; and inasmuch as it behoveth none to hang back when brave men take their lives in their hands, we also will go with them.'

So the king made ready a great ship of cypress-wood, in fashion like a dragon. It was all aglow with golden scales; the anchor was of silver, and the steering paddle overlaid with gold. Within he furnished it abundantly with victual for the voyage, with armour and raiment, and presents of great price. Then Yarl Wate and Morung, Horant and Frute and Yrolt, entered into the ship with seven hundred of their men. They drew aloft the embroidered sail; a fair wind arose and bore them out of harbour. For many days they tilled the barren sea-fields, until weary of sea-toil they saw the welcome land, and steered in for Castle Balian, where Hagen the king kept court.

Being come to shore, Horant and Yrolt took precious jewels in their hands worth many thousand marks, and leaving their men hidden in the ship, came to King

Hagen, saying, 'Behold we have voyaged from a far country where we have heard of thy fame, and we pray thee take these presents at our hands.' Hagen looked at the jewels and marvelled at their great worth. He said, 'What kings are ye, and whence have you come with all this treasure?' Horant answered, saying, 'Banished folk are we. Hast thou not heard of Hettel, who is king in Hegelingen, and of his might and majesty, of the battles he has fought and the riches he has gathered together? He despiseth such as we, and being well befriended careth nothing for his men. Wherefore a few of us, weary of his overbearing ways, have left him seeking service.' Then said Hagen, 'Ye shall abide with me;' and he commanded to make ready lodgings for them in the city.

But Horant and Yrolt gave gold away so lavishly to all within the city that the people said, 'Of a truth these must be the richest kings of the earth.' And the fair Hilda hearing of it desired greatly to see these strangers; wherefore her father bade them to a feast. The Danish knights came at his bidding, arrayed most sumptuously. And the feast being over, and the wine outpoured, the queen and Hilda left the table, desiring that the guests might be brought to them in the inner chamber. First Yarl Wate went in, a huge and burly man, with a great rough beard and brawny hands. But when the queen bade him sit betwixt her and the princess he blushed and stammered, and then blundered shamefaced to the seat. 'Thou art strangely ill at ease in company of ladies,' said the queen. 'Aye, mistress,' said Yarl Wate, 'I am not over smooth of tongue. I am not skilled to lisp about the weather. What shall I say? This seat is soft enough. I never mind me to have sat so soft before, nor to have wrought so hard in doing it. By my life, good ladies!' he cried upstarting, 'a good day's battle with a brisk enemy never wearied me so

much, or made me deem myself so great a fool.' Hilda and her mother laughed pleasantly at his bluff behaviour, and sought to put him at his ease; but Wate would have no more; he strode off to the hall among the king and his men, and in an hour or so became himself again. For the king won on him. Hagen's big voice, his battle knowledge, and his love of fight, opened Yarl Wate's heart, and the two were soon made friends. But for the women, there was none in their esteem like the sweet-voiced Horant. He was fair to look upon as a woman, yet had no lack of courage in the battle-time. His wit was quick; and when he talked his face was in a glow at sight of the strange pictures in his mind, whereby he likened things to one another in curious sort, so that all which heard him wondered and were glad.

Now Hagen spake much with Wate concerning sword-play, and the mystery thereof. So presently Yarl Wate besought the king to appoint him a master of fence to teach him a little of it, because fencing after their manner was a thing in which he was little learned. Then King Hagen sent for the best fence-master that he had, and set him to teach Yarl Wate the rules of sword-play. But quickly losing patience at the long list of early rules which the fence-master laid down, Hagen caught the foil from out his hands crying, 'Away with you! Why all this stuff? In four strokes I will teach this man to use a sword.' So the king fell to with Wate, whom, however, he very soon found an exceeding skilful master of fence. Thereat being somewhat angry, he struck in fiercely; and they both carried on the sport till the buttons flew off the foils; yet neither gat the better of the other. Then Hagen throwing down his foil cried, 'In sooth, never saw I youth learn so quickly.' And Yrolt said, 'There is very little wherein the serving-men of our lord's country are not already learned.'

So as Yarl Wate and his fellows abode continually at

the king's court and feasted with him every day, it befell once on a time, when night was past and the day had begun to dawn, that Horant arose and tuned his voice to a song. The birds, waking in the hedges, had begun to sing, but hearing music sweeter than theirs, they held their peace. Ever higher and sweeter Horant lifted his song till it rang about the palace; and all the sleepers dreamed of Baldur and his home in Ganzblick in the sky. Soon they woke; nor were they sorry to lose their dreams at hearing Horant's song. Hagen heard it, and rose up from his bed. Hilda and her maidens heard it, and arose. Men and women came thronging to thank the singer; but when they came the song was done. Yet none the more would the birds begin their lays; they had lost their notes from wonder. Then Hilda besought her father that by any means he should constrain Horant to sing again. And Hagen being no less crazed with the song, recked not for aught else, and he promised the singer a thousand pounds of gold by weight if he would sing again at eve.

At evening Horant sang. The people filled the hall and flocked about the castle for a great space. The sick came thither and remembered their pains no more. The beasts in the forest and the cattle in the fields left their food; the worms forgat to go in the grass, and the fishes left swimming in the sea. And when the song was done and the folk went their ways, they heard the minster choirs and the chiming of the bells, but took no more pleasure in them.

Hilda sent twelve purses of gold to Horant, intreating him to come and sing to her in her chamber. The singer came and sang the song of Amile, the like whereof no man has ever heard save on the wild flute. No gold was ever so good. The maiden laid her hand within the singer's and bade him choose whatsoever he listed for a song-gift. He said, 'I pray thee give me but the girdle

from thy waist, that I may take it to my master.' She asked, 'Who is thy master?' He answered, 'No banished men are we, but servants of Hettel, king of Denmark, come to woo thee for his bride.' Then Hilda said, 'So thou couldest always sing to me at morn and eve, I would not care whose bride I were.' Horant said, 'Lady, within my master's courts abide twelve minstrels, better far than I; and yet with all the sweetness of their singing my lord sings best of all.' And Hilda said, 'If that be so, I fain would follow thee and be King Hettel's bride. But I know not how. My father will give me to no suitor with his goodwill. I would go but I durst not.' Horant answered her, 'Since thou wouldest, be it ours to dare. We ask no more.'

Then Horant and his comrades got ready their ship for sea, and afterward they came to Hagen, saying, 'The time for our departure draweth nigh, and we must sail to other lands. But before we go, we pray you bring the queen and your fair daughter, that they may see the treasures which we have within the ship.' So on the next day, after mass, King Hagen came down to the beach, with his queen, and the fair Hilda and her maids; with them went a thousand good knights of Ireland. The ship was swung to a single cable, the anchor aboard, the sail tackle free. Upon the sands were spread the Danish treasure chests, filled with costly raiment embroidered with gold and jewels. There was a crowding round the chests to see; Yarl Wate was there, and Frute, and Horant; and in the crowding Hilda was parted from her mother. Hagen and his knights saw nothing for the crowd, and the queen forgot her daughter at beholding the glories of the raiment. But suddenly they heard a shout, and looking up beheld Yarl Wate leap on the bulwarks with fair Hilda in his arms; the next moment Horant and Frute sprang on board with two other maidens. Yrolt smote at the cable with his axe; it parted. The sail was hauled

aloft, and twenty oars shot out from either side to lift the ship along. Hagen and his knights ran quickly down into the sea; but the rowers rowed hard, and armed men in the ship arose, seven hundred strong, and laid about them. Short was the fight, and soon the vessel reached deep water. Loud laughed the Danes to see on the fading shore the angry crowd, the weeping queen, and Hagen raging like a madman, up to his waist in the sea.

Fast sped the ship, and the wind was fair. The Danes made Hegelingen in ten days, and Hettel was wed to Hilda with great joy.

But while they yet sat at the marriage-feast Hagen's war-ship bore down upon their coast. Quickly the Danes rose from the tables, put their armour on, and ran down to the shore. Hagen drave his ship upon the sand, and leapt into the water with his men. A shower of arrows thick as hail was his greeting. Hettel rushed foremost to withstand him. There was fierce fighting betwixt the two for a little space; then Hettel fell, sore wounded; and over his body Hagen and his knights pressed on and hewed their way to land. Fast fell the men, both Danes and Irelanders. Then Yarl Wate encountered Hagen; and the battle-anger fell on both the men; they fought like wild beasts of the wood, till, Wate being wounded in the head, Hagen's war-pike brake at the next blow he struck. Meantime the battle raged furiously. The Irelanders kept their footing, but could not drive back the Danish men; the numbers slain on either hand were equal, man for man. Then Hettel's wounds being bound up, the Danish king cried out to Hagen, 'Of what avail shall it be to you or me to fight this battle out? For every man of mine that falls a man of thine goes down. When it is done there will be an end to Danes and Irelanders alike. But if thou must needs prolong the fight, I will now meet thee, and if Hilda weeps for a dead husband she shall mourn a dead father too.' Then Hagen cast

down his sword, and called off his men. And he said to Hettel, 'Give me thy hand; for in sooth my child has married a brave man; and had I half a score more daughters they should all come to Hegelingen.' So the kings made peace together. And the marriage-feast was all begun again, and kept for twelve days in King Hettel's palace. Moreover a wise woman brought forth herbs and roots, and healed the warriors of their wounds. And after the feasting, Hagen and his men were loaded with gifts, and they entered into their ship and departed to Ireland.

III. GUDRUN'S LOVERS.

KINGS have not always the fairest children; but Gudrun and her brother Ortwin, the children of King Hettel and Queen Hilda, were the comeliest in all Denmark. Words fail to tell how fair was Gudrun; but they which beheld her beauty felt as though the stars had shone upon them. Many came from far countries a-wooing her, amongst them King Siegfried of the Moorland, with a great train bearing rich presents; but King Hettel sent him haughtily away. So Siegfried's anger was kindled against the king of Denmark, and he went back raging to his own land.

Tidings of Gudrun's beauty came to Hartmuth, the young prince of the Normans, son of King Ludwig, and he fell into a great love-sickness because of her; and choosing out sixty noble knights he arrayed them in the richest mail, and laded them with gold and precious stuffs, and sent them on an embassy to ask her in marriage. But King Hettel and his queen spake disdainfully to the messengers, and sent them away. So these returned into Normandy and came to their master. And Hartmuth said, 'Tell me truly, is the maiden so fair as men have

said?' And they answered him, 'Sire, a hundred days we spent upon the journey home, and since we left King Hettel's court we have seen strange and wonderful things by sea and land. But we cannot remember them, for naught save Gudrun's image dwells upon our eyes, as when a man has looked upon the sun at noon and seen him burn.' Then Hartmuth sware that he would never rest till he had won this maiden's love; and he took his journey to Denmark that he might look upon her. He came as an unknown guest, and Hettel gave him stranger's welcome at his table. When Hartmuth beheld Gudrun, he saw that his knights had not told him the half of her beauty, and being consumed with love for her, so that he could no longer hold his peace, he called one of her maidens privily, saying, 'Go, tell Gudrun, I am Hartmuth, of Normandy; and for love of her I have come over land and sea.' And when Gudrun knew it she pitied Hartmuth, though she had no mind towards him. 'Bid him depart quickly,' she said, 'lest my father, learning what errand he comes upon, should slay him in his anger.' So Hartmuth went away sorrowing, and in his bitterness thought to come back and win the maiden with the edge of the sword; yet, loving her too much to force her into wifehood, he forbore.

Now Herwig, prince of Zealand, came also to Denmark a-wooing of Gudrun, and at the end of many days he spake to King Hettel to give him his daughter to wife. And when King Hettel would not, but mocked at his suit, as he had done at the others, Herwig said within himself, 'This man is wholly puffed up with pride; let us see whether of the twain is stronger, he of Denmark or I of Zealand;' and with that meaning in his mind, went straightway back to his people, and gathered together his host, and came up against King Hettel and besieged him in his Castle Hegelingen. When Hettel, King of Denmark, saw Herwig's standard and knew that he was come to fight for

Gudrun, he said, 'Truly this is a worthy man. Hitherto men have pleaded but with words for Gudrun; have babbled and chattered to me as though I were a woman, not a warrior. How shall a man defend his wife in perilous times like these, unless he shows that he can win her with his sword? I like this fellow; the sword talks a language that I can understand. Good sooth, I love him well-nigh as a son already;' and Hettel laced on his ring mail and went out to fight him. Long raged the battle on the plain, but Herwig's knights pushed so hard upon the Danish host that they drave them back for many a furlong mounded with slain; till being hotly pressed against the walls, the Danes turned in panic and rushed, a wild disordered rabble, for the castle gates. Furious at being borne back by the press, King Hettel brake his way through till he encountered Herwig, and then so fierce a battle began that both armies paused to see.

From a window in the castle Gudrun had watched how Herwig smote down the stoutest of her father's knights, and as she watched her eye kindled and her cheek flushed at the glory of the man who fought for her. But no sooner did she see the deadly combat between her father and Herwig than she seized a shield and ran out from the castle and threw herself between the warriors. 'Father, for my sake,' Gudrun said. 'And you, Sir Herwig, prithee answer me. For my sake also will you make the peace?' And Herwig answered, 'If for your sake means all things henceforward for your sake, right gladly will I. Gudrun looked upon the frank, brave face of her warrior, and loved him as he stood there on the battle-plain. And she said, 'So be it as thou hast said.' Then the warriors laid down their weapons, and King Hettel joined their hands, saying, 'I desire no better man to be my son-in-law.' And Gudrun said to Herwig, 'Thee and no other will I have to be my mate, and I will dwell with thee all the days of my life.' So plighted they their troth upon the

battle-field; and after that a feast was held for many days within the castle.

And when the festivity was done, Herwig would have taken Gudrun to wife straightway, but her mother, Queen Hilda, said, 'Nay, for her dowry is not yet prepared, and it will take time to make ready a wedding-feast fit for a king's daughter. Is she not yours? Be content and wait a little; there is no hurry, and Gudrun is very young.' So Herwig was fain to go back to Zealand with a heavy heart for company. But lagging months make lingering years.

Tidings came to Siegfried, King of the Moorland, how Gudrun had given her troth to Herwig, prince of Zealand, and being fiercely wroth thereat he said, 'I shall kindle him a marriage-torch which shall set his land aflame and make Zealand Fire-land, for I will altogether consume it and burn it from the seas.' So he sailed across the sea-ways with twenty wide-breasted ships; and he turned loose his host of Moor-men upon Zealand and ravaged it with fire and sword. Herwig and his people fought fiercely, but Siegfried drave them back and pushed forward over the bodies of many that counted it sweeter to die upon their land than to yield it. And at last Siegfried and his host overran all the country, save only one strong fortress wherein Herwig and his knights were besieged. Howbeit, Herwig contrived to send a trusty messenger into Denmark, who came to King Hettel in his castle at Hegelingen, and told him of Herwig's extremity. Then King Hettel quickly gathered his warriors together to go and help him. And with the king came also Gudrun's brother, Ortwin, bearing his maiden sword, and Yarl Wate his master; there likewise followed Yrolt, Horant, and the greybeard Frute, and a host of redoubtable champions. And these all took ship and coming with speed to Zealand, they fought with Siegfried and overcame him; and with the scourge of swords they scourged the Moor-men from the land, and

burnt their ships, and shut Siegfried up within a rocky castle with water roundabout on every hand. Then King Hettel and his army pitched before the castle to beleaguer it. And Hettel vowed a vow never to rise up from before the walls till Siegfried should yield.

Now there came certain men into Normandy which spake to Hartmuth after this manner: 'Behold, Hettel with all his doughtiest warriors has left Denmark and besieges Siegfried in a castle in Zealand, neither will he stay his hand till Siegfried yields; and the fortress is so strong and well victualled that it can hold out for a year at least. Wherefore what hinders now from falling upon Denmark and gaining Gudrun for your bride?' Hartmuth turned this counsel over in his mind, but liked it not. He said, 'Love hinders. Can the sword make love? Will conquest make unwilling love more willing?' But Queen Gerlinda, his mother, said to him, 'Thou fool: did not Herwig with his good sword win her love? And shall worse fortune follow yours? This is no soft smirking maid to sigh and prate about, but a grand war-woman, whose frame is stirred already with the blood of the heroes whom she will bear. Go, fight and win her: conquer her and she will glory in you; for such women glory more in such defeats than men in victory.' So by these and many other subtle speeches being over-persuaded, Hartmuth sailed with his father King Ludwig and all his army across the sea-plain till he came to the shores of Denmark, and saw shining in the sun the white towers of Castle Matalan wherein fair Gudrun and the queen kept court. When Hartmuth gat to land he hid his warriors in the shelter of a wood, and sent two of his noblest yarls to the castle to intreat Gudrun with fair words to give him her love. But Gudrun answered; 'Go again to Hartmuth and say that I have plighted my troth to Herwig, and so long as I live I shall love none other.' When Hartmuth heard these words he was very angry, and he

blew the trumpet and set his host in array, and came up against Castle Matalan and brake down the castle gates and put the guards to the sword. In the great hall of the castle sat Gudrun, her cheeks white with anger but not with fear. Hartmuth bowed himself before her and said, 'Fair Gudrun, I repent me of all, saving only of my love.' And when for a long time she answered him never a word, he besought her to have compassion on his love and speak with him. She told him, 'I am Gudrun, and I change not.' So being wroth because of her steadfastness he no longer hindered his men from pillaging the castle. And they took Gudrun and thirty of her maidens and carried them off captive to King Ludwig's ship where Hartmuth was, and put out to sea and sailed away.

Men came to Gudrun's father and Herwig as they were besieging Siegfried in his castle in Zealand, and told what had happened in Denmark. Then the king's heart was exceeding heavy because of the oath which he sware; and he bewailed his lot, and all his warriors lamented aloud the cruel fate which had befallen them. Then spake Yarl Wate, 'It is meet for warriors to blot out grief with blood, not tears. Come let us now hotly beset Siegfried within his fortress, and drive him to make peace. So, having kept our vow we shall be free to avenge this greater wrong.' And the king said, 'It is well spoken;' and with one accord they made so fierce an assault upon the castle that Siegfried was fain to sally out and fight. The battle endured the whole day, and great numbers were slain on either side. At nightfall Yrolt came to the castle wall and asked a parley. He said, 'King Hettel will make peace if Siegfried does him friendly homage and holds himself at his command for service.' Siegfried answered, 'War will never conquer us, but peace will save a host of lives. Wherefore we are willing.' Then Siegfried and all his knights lifted up their hands and sware to do warlike service to King Hettel as their liege; and so they made

the peace. And when this was done Hettel opened his heart to Siegfried and spake of what had befallen Gudrun. Then Siegfried made friends with Herwig and said, 'We were foes before for Gudrun's sake, but now for her sake we will make common cause against Hartmuth. Had you not burned my ships we might have quickly started on our errand.' Howsoever, it chanced that a great company of pilgrims were just then come to land, and Hettel and Siegfried seized on their ships and entered into them, both they and their men, and put out to sea in search of Hartmuth.

Now Hartmuth and his father were sailing in their war-ships bearing Gudrun away into captivity. They ploughed the salt sea-fields many days till they came to an island called Wulpensand. There they landed to rest them from sea-weariness. And one day as they looked out seawards they descried a pilgrim fleet with great red crosses blazoned on the sails. But as the ships drew near, seeing the glitter of helm and shield and bright spear-points flashing in the sun, straightway every man seized sword and javelin, and put his armour on. Ludwig and Prince Hartmuth shouted their battle-cry and ranged their host upon the beach.

King Hettel, with Siegfried his ally, and Herwig and Ortwin, ran their ships upon the sand a bow-shot off the shore, and leaped into the sea to fight their way through all the host that met them in the water. With cry and shout they roused themselves to battle fury. Hettel was fighting for his child, Herwig for his bride, and Ortwin for his sister. Fiercely the two hosts met; the air grew dark with hurtling spears; the din of war rose high above the wave-noise: the sea lapped blood upon the shingly beach. Yarl Wate was first ashore; for when King Ludwig hurled his mighty spear at him, Wate held his shield like a rock: so the point stuck therein, and scarcely had the tough ash shaft been shattered with the quiver

of the blow, ere Wate threw himself upon King Ludwig, and flung him reeling down, and so gat foot on land. The battle lasted through the day; night fell and the tumult ceased; yet not because either host was vanquished, but since both were fain to rest. At dawn King Hettel and King Ludwig fought a mortal strife, and King Hettel gat his death-wound; but still the old Dane fought on until he dropped, and dying called upon his daughter's name. Then raged Yarl Wate about the battle-field, terrible in his fury as a wild beast of prey, for he loved his master Hettel. And the Normans feared his anger and the vengeance of the Danes. Many a Norman champion had been stricken down that day, and when night fell they that slept in death on either side outnumbered the living who lay down to rest. Far upon the plain the watch-fires marked the camps of either host. Day brake, and a mist lay thick on land and sea. The Danes waited for their enemies, and went hither and thither seeking them, but only stumbled on the slain. They came to the Norman camp; the watch-fires smouldered still, but no man was by them, for in the night the Normans had betaken themselves to their ships and had carried off Gudrun and her women and sailed away; and the fog covered them from sight. Loud was the clamour of the Danes, and fierce the wrath of Yarl Wate as a lion's robbed of prey. 'We cannot follow them,' said Frute bitterly; 'with this fair wind they are full ten leagues away, and we are now too few to venture on another chase.' So they made a mound of the slain, and buried together friend and foe, earth-covered, on a windy ness, and gat them heavy-hearted to their ships, and made sail for Denmark. But when they reached Queen Hilda's castle all feared to tell of that which had befallen them. The queen came out to greet them and to welcome home her lord the king. And when all held their peace, Yarl Wate stood forward,

and bravely he outspake: 'Many years have I eaten of the king's meat. I have served him through field and flood, and how shall I lie to Hettel's queen? Gudrun is yet a captive. Hettel is slain, and with him the most part of our bravest knights are dead in Wulpensand.' Then the queen covered her face, and went up into her chamber to weep. Many a strong knight lifted up his voice and wept. But Wate said: 'Tears will not bring the dead back, nor rescue Gudrun. It is true there are but a handful of us left, but let us teach our boys to grow up and hate the Normans, and let us train their hands to war, and wait with patience for the reckoning day.'

Meanwhile the Norman ships made a fair voyage. And when land was sighted, King Ludwig called for Gudrun to show her the sun shining upon the green pastures and woodlands of Normandy. 'Behold,' said he, 'the land whereof thou shalt be queen.' Hartmuth stood a little apart to hear how she would answer. Gudrun said: 'I will never be queen of Normandy; I will never be Hartmuth's wife. How should I wed the son of him that slew my father?' Then said Ludwig, 'Choose betwixt queen and bond-slave, whether of the twain you list?' Gudrun answered: 'I have no choice, nor any mind for choice. My troth I pledged to Herwig, and nothing can ever part me from my troth.' Then waxed King Ludwig very wroth, and he caught the maiden by her long hair, and swung her overboard, saying fiercely, 'Death be thy groomsman and the sea thy priest!' But Hartmuth leaped into the water, and dived down until he saw the glitter of her golden hair, upbore her in his arms from the depths into the light again, and gave her to her women. And Hartmuth was very angry with his father because he had done this thing.

Now Queen Gerlinda had prepared a royal greeting for Gudrun, and sought to dazzle her with the splendour of

the court. Arrayed in richest robes of gold embroidery she rode forth on a palfrey from the castle gates, with all the noblest knights of Normandy in her train. Beside her rode fair Ortrun, Hartmuth's sister, whose simple heart felt woman's tenderness toward a prisoner for love's sake. And when Ortrun saw Gudrun she ran and took her hand and kissed her. Never a word spake either woman, but the two were friends henceforward from that hour. Then with haughty courtesy the Queen Gerlinda stooped to kiss the captive, but Gudrun turned her reddened cheek away in sudden pride, saying, 'Gerlinda's kisses would lie harder on me than my wrongs.' Gerlinda made as though she heard not, but she kept that saying in her heart. With feasting and dance, with music and with knightly games, Hartmuth sought to beguile Gudrun of her sorrows; but she had no mind for beguilement, neither would she hearken to his wooing. And in those days Gudrun knew no comfort save when she might lay her head on Ortrun's gentle breast, and there weep out the griefs which she bore dry-eyed before the rest. Ortrun would soothe and hush the stronger woman as a mother lulls her nursling from its pain.

Months passed and Hartmuth longed for Gudrun's love, yet he refrained from importunity, because her peace was dear to him. So he watched and waited, thinking she might change, and lived on hope that each day would bring some word or look in earnest of a change. And when none came, his heart grew sick from hope deferred. His very love grew cruel from its fierceness and its hopelessness; and he hearkened to his mother's counsel. 'Leave her to me; you are too soft a wooer for this haughty girl.' So spake Gerlinda; and a little while after, when Hartmuth was by, she talked with Gudrun on this wise: 'Why not wed my son? Will your pride never bend, that you must tempt me on to break it? Is Hartmuth not a comely man, and prince

of Normandy? Know you not that you shall sit upon my throne and reign with him? Why would you madden me?' Gudrun answered: 'You know that I am troth-plighted. Why weary me? If I were not, I would not wed your son. The blood of my kindred is upon his hands. Your palace is my dungeon; your crown a golden fetter red with my father's blood. How shall I do this wickedness, and break my troth, and break my heart, and bring disgrace upon my kinsfolk?' Loftily she left them, the red anger mounting to her cheek. Then said Hartmuth bitterly, 'Always the same: scorn and hard words. Mother, I will forget this woman; I will go away; and when far off, will feed my memory only with her unkindness.' Then, since the violence of his unrequited love was chilled, his heart became a thought more tender to her womanhood, and he said: 'Do with her as you will when I am gone; only treat her kindly, as becometh a king's daughter, remembering that she has suffered many things already because of us.'

So Hartmuth set out in quest of knightly adventures. But no sooner was he gone than Queen Gerlinda came to Gudrun, saying, 'Now, you despiser of the love of a prince and the kisses of a queen, I shall shortly break your stubborn will. You, who count Ludwig's throne too low to satisfy your pride—how say you if I send you down among the scullions to scour and scrub with base-born drudges?' But though Gudrun's cheek whitened, she answered straitly, 'Do with me as you will; I am in your hands; all that you lay upon me that will I strive to bear, but nothing shall ever break my troth.' Then the queen took Gudrun and stripped off her courtly raiment, and clad her in rags, and set her to drudge in the kitchen. With her also her thirty maidens, who were all dukes' daughters, were made to do the like; and they gathered sticks and made the fires, and cleaned the pots and kettles, and scrubbed the floors, and did all

the foulest work in the castle; and if a filthier task could be found for one than for another, it was given to Gudrun. And their meat was beggars' fare. Thus for three years toiled Gudrun among the scullions, during all which time Ortrun was forbidden to go near her; but often Queen Gerlinda would come and mock her as she toiled, asking whether she found court life to her mind. Yet Gudrun meekly endured, saying only, 'A constant heart for love's sake makes malice easy to be borne.'

Now when three years were over Hartmuth came back, having gained great renown for his valorous exploits in far countries. He had never ceased thinking of Gudrun. He remembered not her unkindness, but only his love; and in the tournament and the battle her name had been his war-cry. But when he came and knew how Gudrun was set to do the work of a bond-slave, he was angry and rebuked his mother, saying, 'Cruelly have you treated the noblest woman in the world;' and he spake no more at that time to his mother, but went down among the scullions to where Gudrun was, and took her hand and made obeisance to her as to a queen, and said: 'Dear lady, believe me I have had neither part nor lot in this. Will you not hear me now? See, I would take you from these noisome tasks and clothe you in richer apparel than ever queen yet wore, and you shall sit upon the throne of Normandy. Dear Gudrun, have you not one gentle word for me? For your sake I went away, striving to forget you, but in vain; for I can love no other woman.' Gudrun said: 'These hardships are less hard than your intreaties. My troth is given, and my mind can never change.' Being vexed he said: 'Did I not seek you over land and sea? Have I not, all these years, dared all things for your sake? Your very life belongs to me who snatched it from the wave; yet you spurn me. Is this a fit reward for deeds like these?' Gudrun answered;

'You snatched me from all that I hold dear—home, kindred, and the man for whom alone I would leave both. You brought my father to his death. For which of these good deeds should I reward you?' Whereat, losing patience, Hartmuth said in a rage, 'Drudge on among the drudges then! My mother was not far wrong if this be still your temper.' So he left her there to slave. But do what he might Hartmuth could not help loving Gudrun, and after a while he went to his sister Ortrun, saying, 'Dear sister, intercede for me with Gudrun. She has borne much and long: wherefore do you take her up out of the kitchen and clothe her in seemly raiment, and let her dwell with you in your bower. Comfort her, and make amends for what she has suffered, and seek to turn her mind towards me; for if cruelty will not soften her heart, perchance kindness may.'

At these words Ortrun rejoiced greatly, for she had grieved heavily at being separated from Gudrun, and bewailed her cruel lot with many tears. So for a long space henceforth Gudrun dwelt with Ortrun, and Ortrun comforted her, and they loved each other as sisters. Very sweetly Ortrun prayed Gudrun that Hartmuth might find favour in her eyes; for indeed she loved her brother and admired him with a sister's pride, neither could she understand how he could be displeasing in the sight of any woman. And she pleaded yet the more earnestly, fearing lest worse things might be in store for Gudrun if she still turned a deaf ear to his suit. But Gudrun always told her that she could never break her troth to Herwig. Long after Ortrun knew this, she yet contrived delay, and put her brother off, saying, 'Wait a little; see what another month will do.' Thus more than a year slipped by, till Hartmuth's mother urging him, he would wait no longer. Then once more he intreated Gudrun for his love's sake, to give him hers. She said, 'I cannot; it is given.' Hartmuth said, 'Bethink you yet again.

Herwig without doubt is dead or faithless long ago. Would I have left my promised bride in a strange land all these years, whilst I might draw a sword or fling a spear? Would Herwig if he loved you? Of a surety he is a worthless knight or a faithless lover.' Gudrun answered him, 'I cannot tell why Herwig comes not. I have looked for his deliverance, and hoped till hope has waned to wanhope. But whether he has forgotten me or not I keep my troth until I die.'

Then Hartmuth no longer hindered his mother from wreaking all her wicked will upon Gudrun. So Queen Gerlinda clad her again in the coarsest weeds, and set her to harder tasks than before. She was sent daily to the seashore to wash clothes from daybreak till dark, and punished with ill words and blows if the full tale of her task was not accomplished. Gudrun murmured not, neither for the hard labour, to which she had never before been used, nor for the harder sayings which the Queen continually cast in her teeth. Gudrun set herself so steadfastly to her work that before long no woman in the land could wash clothes whiter than she. All Gudrun's maidens remained faithful to her, and to their land, save one, Heregard by name, who being beguiled by the king's cup-bearer went away and abode with him, and grew hard of heart, and jeered alike at the sorrows and the constancy of her mistress. But for the rest, their hearts were like to break at seeing the hard tasks which Gudrun did so meekly; and the fairest of them all, named Hildeburg, who was daughter of a prince, spake openly to the queen of her cruelty. Enraged at this, Gerlinda sent Hildeburg also to the seashore to wash with Gudrun. But this was just what Hildeburg wanted, and she rejoiced greatly in her mind at being able to share the toils of her mistress. With her pleasant talk she cheered Gudrun's heart and lightened her labour, so that the long weary days passed quicker. And though

they had to trudge daily through the deep snow to their work on the seashore, bearing their heavy burdens of linen, Gudrun was greatly comforted by Hildeburg; and she would often stop her work for a moment to put her arms round Hildeburg's neck, saying, whilst the tears stood in her eyes, 'God reward thee, Hildeburg, for all thy faithful love.' And Hildeburg would answer with a smile and kiss, 'I have my reward to be with thee.'

Time sped with Gudrun at her toils, till since the battle on the Wulpensand many a spring had come and gone, and many an autumn had yielded up its golden grain. Seedlings of King Hettel's time grew up and blossomed and bare fruit; saplings had grown young trees; and Danish boys, trained by Yarl Wate in hatred of the Normans, were grown up stalwart men, swift javelin-throwers, strong wielders of the sword, with all the mind to put their vengeance in their fingers.

Year by year Queen Hilda had set the smiths of Denmark to make javelin-heads, and sword-blades, and ring-mail. These she stored up in Hegelingen against the reckoning day; and she commanded her ship-wrights to build seven great dragon ships of war and two and twenty smaller ships to be ready against that day. Queen Hilda had long given Gudrun up, thinking in truth that Hartmuth had forced her to wed with him. But she wanted vengeance for her lord King Hettel; and there was scarce a woman in Denmark that did not cry likewise for vengeance for a husband or a brother or a son. So all those years mothers suckled their babes to war, gave bows and spears for playthings to their boys, and trained them to a hardy life, and patiently waited for the day.

At last, grey old Yrolt said to the queen, 'The day has come.' A glad woman was the queen; and straightway gathered she her vassals together, Yarl Wate and Morung and Frute and Horant, with all their warriors;

and she sent and fetched Herwig out of Zealand. Ortwin was a-rivering with his hawks when the messengers came to him. Blithely he loosed the jesses from the birds, took off their hoods and let them fly, saying, 'Now I have a better quarry!'

When all was ready the ships set sail. Many Danish women were there to see. Fiercely they rejoiced, because the day had come.

Yarl Wate steered first for Wulpensand. And as they drew near the island, a storm arose and the winds blew; and ever there came upon the wind a sound of grievous moaning and lamentation from the spirits of the slain; for the dead Danes lay restless in their graves. Wherefore as soon as the storm had abated, the warriors landed, and passed many days upon Wulpensand, watching about the mound, communing with the voices on the wind, and praying for rest for the souls of their kinsfolk. Each night, for nine nights, they kindled the bale-fire, and watched thereby till dawn.

One day, as Gudrun and Hildeburg were washing linen on the beach, they saw something like a white swan, which seemed to rise up from where the red sun sank into the golden sea. But as it drew nigh to them they perceived that it was a sea-maiden of rare and wonderful beauty. And the sea-maiden spake to them, saying, 'Ask something of me, for I know the secrets of the sea.' Then Gudrun besought her to speak concerning her home and kinsfolk, and how it fared with her mother Queen Hilda, and Ortwin her brother. The sea-maiden answered; 'To-night, before the sun set, I was sixty leagues to northward, and there passed a fleet of many Danish war-ships on the waters above my head. I heard the warriors talk. Ortwin is there, Yarl Wate, and Yrolt, with a host of mighty-handed men; and they steer for Normandy. Hilda the queen fares well, and sends them on their errand.' Gudrun said, 'These are of a truth

glad tidings; but tell me of Herwig; does he live, and has he forgotten Gudrun?' The sea-maiden answered, 'Herwig is with them; he has not forgotten, for I heard him speak of Gudrun as his dear and only love. Be of good cheer, maiden, there are strong hands at the oar-banks, and the ships will make no tarrying.' Having thus spoken the sea-maiden sank into the water, and the golden sea closed over her. Then was Gudrun right glad of heart, yet for very joy dared scarce believe the words she had heard; and Hildeburg and Gudrun forgat to finish their tasks, being fain to speak one to another of their dear friends on the sea.

But when they got home at night, and Queen Gerlinda found their work not so much as half done, she be-called them the foulest names, and gave them only a mouldy crust and a cup of water for their supper; moreover, she took away the bed whereon they were wont to sleep, and made them lie upon the hard boards. And when morning brake, and they looked out of their window, they saw the ground covered deep with snow, and the wind was blowing very bleakly. Then Hildeburg found her way to the queen's chamber where Gerlinda slept upon a bed of down, and besought her with tears that if they were to be sent out to wash in the bitter cold they might at least have shoes to wear because of the snow. Gerlinda awoke in a rage, and turning on her soft pillows said, 'You shall both do double task to-day for this; and if you fail you shall be flogged. Shoes, forsooth! You shall not have them. Let your pride warm you!' Hildeburg prayed, 'Have pity on us, or we shall perish in the bitter snow.' But Gerlinda answered, 'Then perish! What care I if you live or if you die? It is naught to me.' Then Gudrun, who had ventured to follow a little behind Hildeburg, said, 'A day may come when you will remember these cruel words.' But the queen had the maidens driven out from

the castle, and made them walk with naked feet through the snow to their hard task on the cold sea-beach.

Now at noon the Danish war-ships drew nigh shore, and Yarl Wate ran the vessels aground just off a headland where a forest stretched down to the water's edge. There the Danes encamped with all their host, both of men and horses, and hid themselves in the shelter of the forest till they might learn how the land lay.

When they had taken counsel together they determined to send out spies; and Herwig and Ortwin being bent on going, these two went forth to spy out the country, saying to their comrades, 'If we are taken, ransom us; if we fall avenge us;' and gat them into a little boat, and rowed along the shore and round the woody headland till they saw a bare bleak beach and two maidens standing by the sea.

Gudrun saw the boat and said to Hildeburg, 'Perad venture these be the men whereof the sea-maiden spake. I should die of shame if any kinsfolk of mine saw Hettel's daughter in this wretched plight.' And Hildeburg being likewise ashamed, they left their washing on the beach and fled. Then Ortwin and Herwig called after them to stay, saying, 'Good washerwomen, do not flee from us; we will not harm you.' But the maidens made as though they heard not.

Then said Herwig, 'For the sake of womankind we would have speech with you.'

Gudrun answered, 'You shall not plead that name in vain.'

Then they turned and came back. And when they came before the warriors, Herwig and Ortwin were astonished at beholding them; for though they shivered with the piercing cold, and were only clad in rags and went barefoot, and though their hands were roughened with hard tasks, they were royal women as a man might see.

'Fear not,' said Ortwin, 'we will do you no hurt. But tell us, does your master keep many maids so fair to wash his clothes?'

Gudrun answered, 'Yonder in the castle are maidens fairer than we. But, good sirs, if you mean us well, hinder us no longer from our work, for we shall smart for it at night.'

Then Ortwin took out rings of red gold, saying, 'These will we give you if you will only answer us the questions that we shall ask.'

'Gifts are of no use to us,' said Gudrun, 'they would be taken from us. Ask your questions quickly, but do not keep us idling from our work. We will answer, even if each word should cost a stripe to-night.'

Then Herwig asked, 'Tell us whose is the castle yonder?'

They answered, 'That is King Hartmuth's castle, these are his lands.'

'And Hartmuth, is he within the castle?'

They answered, 'Yes: and with him four thousand of his strongest warriors keep the walls.'

Now the maidens might have gone back to their work, for the warriors had learned all that they wanted to know; but Gudrun and Hildeburg tarried on, because the Danish tongue was so sweet to them and sounded like old music to their ears.

Ortwin said, 'Why does Hartmuth keep so many warriors within walls? Is he then at war with his neighbours, or has he need to rule his people with the sword?'

Gudrun answered, 'Nay. But he used to fear sometimes that a people far across the sea would come and take vengeance for a king of theirs whom he slew. Now, perchance, it is old habit; it is long ago, and Hegelingen is so far.' But at the mention of her home the tears

came up in Gudrun's eyes, insomuch that she was fain to turn aside to hide them.

Then seeing them shiver in the snow, Herwig and Ortwin took off their furred mantles and besought the maidens to wrap themselves from the cold; but Gudrun said, 'God reward you for your charity, but it is not meet for a maid to wear the garment of a man.'

Now as Herwig steadfastly beheld the face of Gudrun he saw continually how like she was to Hettel's daughter, yet never so much as thought that it was Gudrun herself, believing that Hartmuth had long ago forced her to be his wife. And Ortwin said, 'Many years ago, was not a company of noble maidens carried captive to this place? And was not one of them called Gudrun?'

Gudrun told him, 'Yes: Hartmuth brought them. I knew Gudrun well; and better than most I know how much she suffered, and how long. If you know any friends of Gudrun's, I pray you tell them, "She suffered, and she kept her troth, and died."' For Gudrun thought, it is better that my kinsfolk think so than know of my disgrace.

When he heard these words a great trembling fell upon Herwig, and he cried out in the bitterness of his soul, 'O Gudrun, thou that wast and art my only love! What can I do? Too late! too late!'

Gudrun said quickly, 'Man, do not lie to me. Thou Herwig! Herwig died long ago. I tell you I have seen him with his spear bear down an army when he came and fought before Hegelingen. No. Herwig is dead, or long ere this he would have come to save his faithful maid from shame!'

Then said Herwig, 'Who art thou?'

Gudrun answered, 'One of the captive maidens.'

'If you were one of Gudrun's maidens,' he said, 'you should know this ring upon my hand, for it was Gudrun's ring. She gave it me.'

Then a light came into Gudrun's face and the tears into her eyes. 'I know the ring,' she cried. 'I gave it; and to thee. I am Gudrun. Behold thy ring is yet upon my hand!' She fell upon his breast, and there he folded her. Who shall tell the tears they wept at greeting after so long sorrow? So they all knew each other, and Gudrun found her lover and her brother both in one day.

Herwig would have carried Gudrun off straightway to the Danish camp but for Ortwin. Gudrun pleaded likewise to be delivered immediately from her hard bondage; but Ortwin would not. He said, 'How can I steal thee, sister, like a thief? Fear not. We will certainly deliver thee.'

And Herwig said, 'Ortwin is right. We cannot do this thing. But be of good courage; we have many thousand stalwart Danes with us, and the day is nigh at hand.' But Gudrun's heart sank within her, for she knew that a short delay had cost already all the years of her captivity. Herwig said, 'Only a little while and we will never more be parted.' So the two men entered again into the boat and rowed away to their camp behind the headland.

When they were gone Hildeburg said, 'We have tarried too long from our task to get it done to-night, but let us set to work and try what we can do, if peradventure it may lighten our punishment.' Proudly spake Gudrun: 'Away with your tasks! I have talked with kings to-day, and they have held me in their arms. I will no longer slave. Gerlinda may do her worst. I care not.' And with that she took up all the heap of linen clothes and flung them in the sea.

Now it befell that Heregard, that same faithless damsel which left her mistress for love of the king's cup-bearer, seeing afar off how the men met Gudrun on the beach, ran and told the queen that Gudrun had been kissing two fishermen; for such she thought them, seeing their boat and their rough furred mantles in the distance. So at night when the maidens got back to the castle, Gerlinda

bowed herself before Gudrun in mock obeisance, saying, 'O proud and modest maiden, once a despiser of kings' sons, now not too coy to kiss base fisher-people on the beach, have I broken your pride at last? Nay; lie not, woman: Heregard, here, saw you.'

Then said Gudrun in disdain, 'It is not true. Never kissed I a man save he was of my kindred.'

The queen cried in a rage, 'Do you tell me to my face that I lie?' Then casting her eyes on the empty washing baskets, she said, 'Where are the clothes, you idle drudge?'

Gudrun answered, 'I threw them into the sea. There they may stay; I will no longer wash your clothes.'

Gerlinda's very fingers itched to strike Gudrun. Quickly she commanded to fetch a bundle of sharp thorns, and bade her servants strip Gudrun and bind her to the door-post for a flogging.

Then while all the women made doleful lamentations, Gudrun bethought what she should do. And presently she spake to Gerlinda, saying, 'How can I wear the crown after being scourged in sight of all the servants in the hall?'

'What mean you?' asked the queen, scarce believing her ears.

Gudrun answered, 'I am tired of drudging at your tasks, weary of rags and beggar's fare. My mind is changed. I will be queen. Go and tell Hartmuth so.'

Then Gerlinda, rejoicing greatly in her triumph, made haste and came and told her son. And Hartmuth, not yet daring to believe the words he heard, ran in, and though Gudrun was still clad in her dripping rags, would have taken her in his arms and comforted her from her long hardships. But Gudrun drew back and avoided him, saying, 'Let not my lord the king be angry, but to-day I am a serving-maiden, and in these tattered

garments I shrink from before the king's state and magnificence. Array me first in royal raiment, that I may shame neither myself nor thee.'

Hartmuth said, 'Thou art queen already. Command what thou wilt and it shall be done according to thy word.'

Then said Gudrun, 'I would have a bath made ready to-night and all my women set free to wait on me.' So Hartmuth sent and commanded her thirty maidens to be brought from their tasks, and caused them to be clothed in garments fitting their high degree, and set them to wait upon Gudrun. And next morning when they were brought before the king, Gudrun walked queen among them all as the moon sails among the stars.

Hartmuth commanded the tables to be spread and piled with delicious meats; and they poured out the ale and mead and held a feast. The king set Gudrun upon his right hand and next to her the gentle Ortrun. Glad was Ortrun because they were reconciled, and she said to Gudrun, 'Sweet sister, I am happy because of thy relenting. My brother would have wed no other woman, and I was the next heir to the throne. I am not wise enough nor fair enough to wear a crown, but thou art worthy. Dear sister, I am glad.' And Gudrun being touched at the gentleness of her good friend, said, 'Dear Ortrun, God forbid I should ever forget all thy love and tenderness to me in time of need.'

Now when the feast was ended Gudrun spake to the king, saying, 'My lord Hartmuth, it is the custom in our land whenever a king would wed, that he should first gather together all his nobles to a feast, that they may see their queen and approve the king's choice, and so have no excuse for after strife.'

Hartmuth answered, 'After thine own manner will I wed thee.' So he sent out messengers to go all round the

country and summon his lords to the banquet. But Gudrun went away to her chamber, and when she was alone with her handmaidens she bade them be of good courage for deliverance was certainly nigh at hand; and she spake to them concerning Herwig and her brother whom she had met on the sea-beach. Then were they all glad, and Gudrun laughed aloud for joy. But a certain damsel of the castle passing by the chamber door, heard her laugh and went and told the queen. And Gerlinda went and told Hartmuth, saying, 'Gudrun laughed to-night. She has not laughed for years. This is an ill-foreboding; I feel as though some evil hung above our heads.' But Hartmuth answered, 'What idle fear is this? Gudrun laughed? Why not? It is fit she should make merry, and rejoice to end her toil, and wed with me, and be the Queen of Normandy.' So with a smile he bade his mother go to rest; but he went down into the hall and walked among his guards and set the watches for the night. Gerlinda lay and tossed upon her bed of down, and sleepless longed for day, yet feared to see it break.

Two of Gudrun's maidens watched at her window through the night; a wild March night, when the clouds were torn in the windy sky and the very heavens seemed adrift with the stars. So softly gathered the Danes about the castle walls that no noise was heard save the sea leaping on the sounding beach and the gust that shook the trees and howled among the castle battlements. But in the first grey dawn the maidens saw things move beneath the window, and ever and anon the glint of a spear, till as the darkness lifted they perceived the Danish host and their banners, and ran to Gudrun, saying, 'Wake mistress, wake, for help has come.'

Just then the warder sounded an alarm, and the castle woke into a tumult of noise and clangour as Hartmuth and his knights girt on their armour and hurried to the battlements. Thence they looked out and saw the

avenging banner of the son of Hettel blazoned with dagger points over stripes of blood, and Siegfried's escutcheon marked with a red-gold head upon a field of brown. They saw a white banner with gold streaks which Queen Hilda wrought for old Yarl Wate; and foremost of all, the flag of Herwig, King of Zealand, with sea-weed figured on an azure field. Then came Hartmuth down to the great hall with his father Ludwig, and put himself at the head of all his warriors and gave command to open the castle gates. But his mother came and besought him, saying, 'Why go out and fight, my son? Is there not victual in the castle for a year? Then let them rage against the walls, whilst you hurl missiles and great stones upon them, or shoot out quarrels from the loopholes. Go not out against them, for I fear evil will come of it, and something tells me I shall never see you more.'

But Hartmuth said to his knights, 'Take her away. This is no place for women.' And when they had so done he cried, 'Fling open the gates!' and with his mighty following, swarmed out upon the foe. First he met Ortwin, and they brake a spear together, but the crush of battle parted them. Then again they met, and Hartmuth clave Ortwin's helmet and rejoiced to see the blood of his enemy. But a hundred spears pressed forward and strong Danish hands were there to drag Prince Ortwin from his death. Then far as a man might see the war-waves rolled upon the plain, and the hosts swayed to and fro in one great angry battle-tide. And as here and there upon a sea a billow swells more angry than the rest, so round Yarl Wate and Herwig, and round about Hartmuth and King Ludwig, the war-waves raged most furiously. Ludwig and Herwig fought; Herwig burning to avenge King Hettel's death; but Ludwig brought him to his knees and struck him senseless for the moment with his heavy blade. A sturdy Dane put forth his body in that instant and took the death-blow meant for his master.

Full of bitter shame was Herwig that Gudrun should see him on his knees before the slayer of her father; and he arose and snatched his sword again, and while King Ludwig raised his arm to strike, smote him through the armpit to the heart; so the king rolled down and sobbed his life-blood out upon the sand. King Ludwig being slain, the Danes gave a great shout and tare the Norman host to pieces like clouds tattered in the blast. Hartmuth made a great stand against Wate before the castle doors, but the old Yarl's blows were like a sledge-hammer beating a smith's anvil; and in the midst of the fray Hartmuth heard his sister's voice shrieking for help, for a murderous Dane had got into the castle and she was struggling for her life. Yarl Wate knew it and let him go; so Hartmuth turned to the castle gate and saw the man come running out, for Gudrun's women had fought for Ortrun and driven him down, and he was thinking to escape; but Hartmuth killed him in the gateway, and then ran to fight Yarl Wate again.

Now Ortrun looked out from the window, and beheld how the Normans were slain on all sides by the fierce-hearted Danes, and she fell down at Gudrun's feet and besought her, saying, 'Have pity on my people, on my friends and kindred. For the dead's sake spare the living. Scarce a handful of our men remain. My father has been slain as thine was. Have pity on us: you have had blood for blood. And see,—O sister, see how Wate is pressing on my brother Hartmuth! He will kill him in his cruel war-rage. Hartmuth is faint and staggers! Save my brother, sweet Gudrun; pity us, and bid the battle cease.'

Then Gudrun took Ortrun in her arms and kissed her, and said, 'Sister, God forbid that I should forget all thy tenderness to me; but what can I do? How can I end this bitter strife?' And Ortrun took her kerchief, saying, 'Wave it to Herwig. Make no tarrying, for the love of

God, or Hartmuth will be slain!' So Gudrun waved it from the window and by good fortune Herwig saw it and came to the wall. Gudrun said, 'Quick! stay the battle, as you love me. Save Hartmuth. See! Make haste!'

Then Herwig hasted, and ran in betwixt Yarl Wate and Hartmuth and cried aloud, 'Gudrun bids the battle cease. Let no more blood be shed.' But the battle-madness was on Yarl Wate and he was terrible to friend and foe. 'What! cease at a woman's bidding?' and he took Herwig by the middle and flung him far afield, then ran again on Hartmuth hungering ravenously for his life. But they blew the trumpet and the battle was stayed; and the host came up, and some with their shields sheltered Hartmuth; others, a great company of them, hustled Wate away. So Hartmuth was saved from death; and they took and bound him and carried him off captive to their ships. Then the Danes hewed down the castle doors with their axes and brake in for plunder. They carried off King Ludwig's treasure chests with all his gold and jewels, and beat down all that hindered them.

Ortrun sought Gudrun and came weeping, saying, 'Thy people are athirst for blood. They slay on all hands men and women. They will have my life: save me, good sister!' Gudrun answered, 'Fear not, thy life is dearer to me than my own. Come in with us, thou and thy maidens. No evil shall come nigh thee, dear sister.'

Then came also the Queen Gerlinda wringing her hands and wailing bitterly. She knelt down and kissed Gudrun's feet, and covered them with her tears, and craved for mercy, saying, 'O mighty queen! deliver me from this blood-thirsty band.'

Gudrun said: 'Did ever prayer or cry of mine once melt your stony heart? Have you not turned a deaf ear to my sharp distress? Yet I will let you in. Be in my chamber as one of my maidens.' Then Gudrun let her

in, and made fast her chamber door; and all the women crowded together for fear at hearing the terrible sounds in the castle.

There came a mighty blow which brake down the chamber-door. Yarl Wate ran foaming in among the women; blood upon his jaws and beard, blood upon his hands; his armour reeking with fresh blood; he, like a wild war-beast, blood ravenous still. Fearless, Gudrun went to him. 'Away, thou man of blood! this is no fit guise for women's company.' The old yarl blundered to his knee. 'Pardon, Queen Gudrun, but I would know who these women be.'

Gudrun said: 'That is Ortrun, my friend and sister, see thou touch her not. Those are her waiting women. These are my maidens that came with me from Hegelingen. Now begone.' So he went off grumbling.

Then quickly ran the false Heregard into the chamber, intreating to stand with Gudrun's maids. Gudrun said, 'Of your will you left them; you shall not return to them of mine. Go stand with Ortrun's women if you choose.'

Yarl Wate raged up and down the castle seeking Gerlinda, but at last came back to Gudrun's chamber in a fury. 'Where is that woman? Give her up to me. I tell you she is here: and I will have her.'

Gudrun answered boldly, 'She is not here.'

Wate said, 'Then I will slay them all, for one I know is she.' Now Queen Gerlinda had crouched down behind the other women, and at these terrible words the rest fell down upon their knees; so Wate saw her. Then he came and dragged her to the door by the hair, and saying fiercely, 'Have you any more clothes for my queen's daughter to wash to-day?' cut off her head; whereat the women shrieked in terror. He said, 'Now I will have her that sold herself to that dead woman;' and at this so many of the maidens looked towards Heregard, that

Wate seized her, and at one blow sent her head rolling on the floor.

Now after the strife was done and they had buried the bodies of the slain, the Danes carried off five hundred captives to their ships and much treasure, and set sail for Denmark. Ortrun went with Gudrun in one ship, and Hartmuth went in keeping of Yarl Wate. Proudly they sailed home to Castle Matalan, and joyful was the greeting that Queen Hilda gave her warriors. They held a royal feast with music and with dance, and day by day in the mead-hall the skalds sang of the deeds that each man had done in battle.

Long pondered Gudrun in her mind how the long strife between the Danes and Normans might be ended; for she thought, a day will come when the Normans will grow strong again and seek revenge; first they, then we may conquer, and the feud will never cease. So she went to her brother Ortwin, and said, 'Brother, let us make a lasting peace with the Normans; and thereto that we may bind both peoples do thou take the gentle Ortrun for thy wife.' Ortwin said, 'I am in nowise loth, for Ortrun is both fair and tender of heart. But would Ortrun wed with me? Have we not slain her father and her mother?' Gudrun said, 'Ask her; she is all gentleness.'

And a little after that came Ortrun shyly to Gudrun, saying, 'Shall I?' Gudrun answered, 'You have called me sister; will you be my real sister?' Ortrun kissed her—'Dear sister, I will.'

Then Gudrun made intercession with the queen her mother that Hartmuth might be set at liberty; and this being granted, he was brought into the great hall, not knowing whether life or death should be his portion. Gudrun came and led him away a little apart and spake with him. 'Hartmuth, look forward many years; think of the children of our peoples, and their children's

children. What if this strife go on through many generations, and our boys be only born to die in battle, and our girls to grow up mothers weeping for their dead? Is it not better to establish peace for ever? My brother would wed thy sister, and we offer thee the noblest maiden in our realm, the lady Hildeburg, that was ever a sweet and faithful friend to me, to be thy wife. Wilt thou thus make alliance with us and put an end to many sorrows throughout many ages?'

Hartmuth walked to and fro upon the pavement, and for a long while answered nothing, but went on turning over many things in his mind, and weighing his long love against the long future of his people. Presently he spake: 'When Ortwin weds with Ortrun, I will take Hildeburg to wife.' Gudrun was moved to tears, and took him by the hand and called him friend, and kissed him for the first and only time; and that in sight of Herwig and of all the people. Then lightly ran she off to Hildeburg with these glad tidings, knowing aforetime the secret of her heart.

Such a day was never known for rejoicing in Denmark as when Gudrun and Herwig were wed, and with them Ortwin and Ortrun, and Hartmuth and Hildeburg. The five hundred captives were set free, and Danes and Normans made a solemn vow that peace should henceforth be betwixt them, since they were become of one blood. Thenceforward, in the long years of quiet, when both peoples prospered and grew rich, their children's children sitting by the fireside told the tale of Gudrun, and blessed her that she made the peace.

THE STORY OF FRITHJOF AND INGEBJORG.

KING BELÉ of Norroway had a little daughter named Ingebjorg. The boy Frithjof was her playfellow in her father's palace. No king's son nor royal prince was Frithjof: he was only Thane Thorsten's boy. But the king and the thane were friends; and because friendship makes all men equal, there was no more constraint betwixt king and thane than betwixt their two children which played together in the palace.

When Ingebjorg was six years old it came into King Belé's mind to send her to the sage Hilding, to learn the wisdom of men and the knowledge of the gods; but liking not to part the children, he asked leave of Thorsten and sent Frithjof also, to be brought up with her in all the learning of the time.

Hilding dwelt by the sea. Above the windy cliffs, far up a bleak down-side, was a garden in the hollow of the hills, sheltered by wood and mountain; a garden where one might always hear the breaking of the waters on the beach. There Hilding dwelt; there he taught Ingebjorg and Frithjof many years. You have seen the bud that swells and pinkens till the glory of the rose unfolds? So fair grew Ingebjorg. You have seen the sapling oak grow up and lift its arms to brave the storm? So strong grew Frithjof. Hilding taught Frithjof the Runes because he was the elder; but Ingebjorg learned them of

her playmate. In the open air she learned them, from his lips, wandering with him across breezy hills, or through forests of murmurous pine, or sitting at his feet by the sea-shore, watching the white-fringed waves curl in. The first spring flowers of the year, the first summer fruit, Ingebjorg took from Frithjof's hands. For her he climbed the tallest trees to bring down birds' nests; for her he clambered up the steep black crag upon the promontory, and robbed the eagle's eyrie. Sometimes in a little boat the boy would venture with her far out upon the heaving sea; but if the wind blew and heeled the boat a-list, or drave the spray in sheets upon them, Ingebjorg would only clap her hands for joy: she had no fear where Frithjof was.

As their childhood wore away Ingebjorg stayed oftener at home, learning embroidery and womanly work; Frithjof grew up a great hunter. Yet ever he brought his spoils to Ingebjorg—no longer flowers and fruit, but heads of wild boar, skins of bear.

In the long winter evenings, sitting round the hearth, Hilding would tell them stories of the gods. Sometimes he spake of Freyja and her golden hair which is praised in all lands; but Frithjof would smooth Ingebjorg's shining tresses, and think, 'Freyja's hair is less beautiful and golden than this.' Sometimes he talked of Frigga, and how she had the most lovely eyes in all the world; but Frithjof looked into Ingebjorg's sweet blue eyes, and believed it not.

Hear a story Hilding told them:—

Baldur's Death.

Baldur was fairest of all the sons of Odin Allfather. Radiant and shining was his body; when he rode his white horse through the sky, light streamed out from him over all the earth. Who so dear to gods and men as Baldur!

Wise and sweet were his words. The gods kept silence in Asgard when he spake. Baldur made wells of water on the earth. Wheresoever he thrust his spear into the ground a spring of water gushed forth, and a grove of trees sprang up. Those springs never fail and those trees are evermore renewed; and so long as the world lasts the groves shall be holy sanctuaries which no man may profane, but wherein priests continually shall sacrifice.

Baldur's home was a palace called Breidablick, built on pillars in the heavens, far above the clouds, farther than eye can see; far above storm and rain; where flowers never fade and summer never dies. There Baldur dwelt with Nanna, his soft-eyed wife, in perfect happiness; for no evil thing could pass the pillars of his palace. He loved all things in heaven and earth. Asgard was filled with joy because he was glad, and beneath his smile the earth laughed.

But evil dreams came to Baldur in his sleep. He dreamed that he should die; and when he was awake the like sad foreboding fastened on his mind, so that a gloom came over him. Nanna sat and sighed because of his sorrow; his mother Frigga, goddess of earth, wept secretly, and all Asgard was saddened. Odin Allfather took counsel with the gods, and meditated day and night, but all in vain. Neither could his wise ravens, Huginn and Muninn, who know the thing that has been and is, tell him aught of what should befall Baldur.

Then Odin determined to go down to the pale kingdom of Death to find out what it was that threatened the son most dear to him. He mounted his steed Sleipnir; and, his two wolves following and the two wise ravens circling round his head, he sped down like lightning through the air and coming to earth took the path that leads to the cold regions underground where pitiless Hel holds sway. In a kingdom of fog down a horrible depth lives Hel, the restless goddess of Death. Loki, whose heart is Malice,

is her father, and Hel's sisters are the terrible wolf Fenrir, and the great earth-encircling serpent.

Hel sits on a throne of skulls and bones. Her face is loathsome with corruption like a corpse. Her plate is Hunger; her knife Greed; Misery her hall; Silence her threshold; her bed is Wasting; her bed-hangings men call Pest; Sloth is her hand-maiden. Foul and black is her habitation, noisome with slime and death-dews; the pillars of her house are serpents' bones; a river trails through the hall, thick and sluggish with its load of rotten dead. Nidhoggr sits on the banks sucking the corpses of murderers.

Odin came along the path which no living foot has trod. The death-hound howled; but he saw the king of gods and men, and slunk back to his lair. Odin looked down through rolling fogs that came up from the halls of Hel, and dimly he saw the pale Death-kingdom. Behold, there was a table newly spread, a cup fresh filled with mead, and a golden bed made ready; but no man sat at the table, nor drank of the cup, nor lay upon the bed. Then Odin came to the grey stones beneath which the Norns lie sleeping. He sprinkled sand on one of the stones, and with his sword-point wrote in the sand three times the Runic words which wake the dead. The Norn awaking, spake from beneath the hollow stone: 'What would you? I am weary; let me sleep.' Odin said, 'In Hel's pale palace, lo, I see a bed made ready, a table spread, and mead outpoured. Say, for whom are these things prepared?' The Norn answered, 'Baldur will sit at the table; Baldur will drink of the cup; Baldur will lie in the golden bed. I am weary; let me sleep.'

Swiftly sped Odin back to Valhalla, his glorious palace, built of shining spears and roofed with golden shields. Heavy-hearted sat Allfather in his radiant hall; and the Æsir made lamentation with him because it was written that Baldur should die. Then Baldur's mother, the

Queen Frigga, thought of a plan. She said, 'Let us take an oath of all things in heaven and earth that they will not harm Baldur.' And all the Æsir said, 'This is well spoken.'

Then the gods sware 'We will do Baldur no hurt.' Spear, and sword, and arrow, axe and javelin, every manner of weapon whereof the pattern is in Valhalla, clanged against his fellow, saying, 'We will do Baldur no hurt.' Sun, moon, and stars, as they rolled, sang, 'We will do Baldur no hurt.' The clouds sware it, and all that is in them; lightning, and rain, and ice, and tempest, and the howling winds. Sickness, Plague, and Famine came forth from their lurking places, and said with one accord, 'We will do Baldur no hurt.' The Night sware it, and the shadows, and the dews and mists; the Fire leaped up to take the oath.

Frigga, goddess of the earth, came down to her kingdom, and prayed all things to do her son no harm. The multitudes of people cried with one glad voice, 'We will do Baldur no hurt.' Then the sea and all that is therein sware it; the air and every fowl and insect that moveth above the earth. The earth and all things underground murmured, 'We will do Baldur no hurt.' Every beast and creeping thing that goeth on the earth, all trees and herbs that spring from the ground, made a covenant with Frigga, saying, 'We will do Baldur no hurt.'

Neither was there anything in heaven above nor in the earth beneath which took not the oath, save only a little spray of mistletoe which had no root on the ground but grew upon an aged oak and sapped the life out of the tree.

Happy was Frigga; happy Allfather. The gods made merry and rejoiced. And after that Baldur would stand among them for sport, whilst they flung spears and javelins at his body, or smote at him with swords. No

weapon harmed him; neither point nor edge would so much as scratch his skin, because of the oath which all things had taken to do Baldur no hurt. So the livelong day Baldur's ringing laugh sounded through the halls of Asgard, whilst he played among the gods and caught their spears and arrows in his naked hands.

But Loki was envious of Baldur. Loki has no pleasure unless he can bring sorrow to the hearts of gods and men. Loki found out that the mistletoe alone, of all things in heaven and earth, had not taken the oath; and he hasted and cut it down, and made an arrow of the twig, and pointed it very sharp. Then came Loki to the wood of Glasir, outside Valhalla, where the Æsir were shooting at Baldur.

Hoder, the blind god, stood apart from the rest, laughing to hear the merriment, but took no part in the games —how should he, being blind?

Loki came to Hoder, saying, 'Come, join the sports You will know where Baldur is by the sound of his laugh. Take this arrow. Fling it; and show that a blind god can do as well as the rest.' Hoder took the arrow from his hand and flung it at Baldur with a merry laugh.

Baldur fell dead; pierced to the heart. The blue faded from his eyes, and his radiant body grew pale and cold. Quick the Æsir gathered round their favourite. Nanna was there, and Frigga, calling on his name. But Baldur was far away in the dusky kingdom of Hel, sitting at the golden table, and drinking the mead from the golden cup before lying down upon the golden bed. Sharp was the sorrow of the gods, and bitter the sound of their wailing in Valhalla. 'Baldur is dead. Dead! Baldur the Beautiful is dead—is dead!' All things on earth made lamentation, saying, 'Baldur is dead! Dead! Baldur the Beautiful is dead—is dead!'

Loki could not be found. Not even the anger and grief of Odin Allfather could find him. Blind Hoder wept bitterly, because Baldur was very dear to him.

They bore Baldur's body to his good ship Ringhorne that lay beached upon the margin of the sea. But for all they are so strong, the Æsir could not push the ship into the water, it was so heavy. Then they called Firesmoke the giantess, who came riding on a wolf with a bridle of serpents. She, by her great strength, pushed the ship into the water: so swiftly it ran down the beach that the rollers caught fire as it rushed into the sea with a mighty noise. Thor was angry at the fire and smoke, since it is his alone to shake the earth with thunder and lighten from the sky; and with his hammer he would have slain the giantess, only the other gods besought him, and he spared her.

Then they made a pile upon the ship's deck, and laid Baldur thereupon. With his own hand Odin took the torch and lighted up the fire, and when the flames leaped high and wreathed round Baldur's body, Odin cast his ring Dröpnir therein, and sent the vessel sailing on the sea; whilst all the Æsir cried, 'Baldur is dead!—dead! Baldur the Beautiful is dead!—is dead!' But the gentle Nanna wept not: Nanna mourned not for Baldur. She was with him. Grief had killed her.

Odin sent down to Hel in her cold kingdom underground, 'What ransom wilt thou take, and give me back my bright and radiant boy?' Hel answered, 'Treasures are naught to me; I will have tears. Is Baldur verily so dear to gods and men? Let all things weep for him, and I will give him back; but I will first have tears from everything in earth and heaven.'

So the command went forth. 'Let all things weep for Baldur.'

The winds wailed; the clouds wept; the stars hid their faces; sun and moon grew wan and pale; dews rose from the earth; every tree and flower bowed its head; tears stood upon each blade of grass; the birds ceased their songs;

the wide sea moaned on every shore. There was nothing on earth which did not weep for Baldur.

In Asgard there was mourning and lamentation among the gods. Was there anything that mourned not for Baldur? Loki was not in Asgard. Loki was not to be found. But far apart there sat a grey old woman, nursing her knees, who sat and munched, and muttered the while:—'Baldur gladdened me never in life—I will not weep for Baldur.' Peradventure that old crone was Loki in disguise. That is why Baldur comes not back.

But will he never return to brighten earth and heaven? It is written that Baldur shall not always dwell beneath the ground. His radiance shall break out from Hel's dark prison-house, and burst through lock and bolt and bar. The sky will know when Baldur is coming, and will shine again as in the olden days when he sped across it on his swift white horse. The earth will know, and for gladness flowers will spring up from the ground; the trees will lift their heads and blossom, and all the birds of the air shall sing; yea, everything shall make music and be glad when Baldur the Beautiful comes back.

That was how Hilding taught them of the Death of Summer time. When it thundered he would say, 'Hark, that is the rumbling of Thor's chariot wheels over the clouds!' And when it lightened, 'See how his hammer flashes across the sky! He is flinging at the Trolls.' So Hilding joined earth and heaven in their minds, and showed them the parables of trees and hills and clouds.

What wonder that, as they grew in years, great love sprang up between the two? What wonder if they saw the beauty of the gods within each other's eyes? Frithjof was Ingebjorg's Baldur; she, his soft-eyed Nanna. And when Frithjof would tell Ingebjorg that she should be his wife

some day, it made her glad: in truth she wished no better lot.

But Hilding when he knew of this was sorry and said: 'O Frithjof, root out this love from thy heart before it grow up and bear thorns. Thou art a bondsman's son. Ingebjorg is daughter of King Belé, whose generation springeth from the gods.'

Frithjof answered, 'Hast thou not taught me that before the gods a man is what he is, not what his fathers were? Do not the gods deny their own offspring if they prove unworthy, and take instead to sit with them in Valhalla the noble-minded and the fierce in war?'

But Hilding only bade him think no more of his love, for that evil would certainly come of it.

King Belé waxed old and feeble. One day as he sat in his palace he leaned on the hand of his friend, the grey old thane Thorsten. And the king said, 'Good friend, our life-day is far spent, and the night draws on. The steel helmet presses heavily on my weary head; the mead has lost its flavour. It is time to rest. But through the darkness we will muse upon the brightness of the gods—so shall our thoughts be like stars to cheer the night, until the day breaks on the golden splendour of Valhalla. Summon hither my sons, and with them thy son Frithjof, that I may bless them while I have strength, and bid them hold together as we have done.'

Thither came the king's sons, Helgi and Halfdan to the palace; Frithjof was with them. Dark and gloomy was the countenance of Helgi: he came from communion with the priests; blood fresh upon his hands from the noon-tide sacrifice. Halfdan, the younger, bright as sunshine, had the face and form of some fair wilful girl who had girt on sword and ringmail for a merry jest. Frithjof

stood a head above them both, and nobler, as the noon is twixt the night and day.

King Belé said: 'When I am gone I would have you three dwell in one mind. As the spear-ring bindeth the spear-shaft together, so fellowship shall make you strong. Let the sword-point guard your borders, but cover ye the kingdom with the shield. In the people is the strength of a king. He is a fool that oppresseth them; the tree withers when the roots lack nourishment. There be four pillars which do carry the heavens, but only one pillar supporteth the throne of a king. Law is its name; and that king which doeth his own will instead of the law, pulleth down the seat whereon he sitteth. Son Helgi, be strong, but forget not mercy. Mercy adorneth might as a flower is an ornament to a brazen shield. The mighty should be tender; the best blade bendeth most. Trust not to auguries; the signs in the altar-victim may deceive, but never the Runes that Odin writes upon an honest heart. Get trusty friends; they are to a man like bark to a tree, to shelter the heart in the evil day of winter storm. Boast never of thy sires. What profiteth a mighty bow to him that cannot bend it to send forth the arrow? Every river rolleth to the sea on his own waves. Halfdan, thou art bright and pleasant; but the sweetest honey without hops will make no mead. Let thy sword-hilt glisten with gems, if so thou hast the mind, but when thou drawest it let all men know that the blade is steel. Get knowledge; fools are many, wise men few. Remember folk will come to thy feasts because thou art a king's son; they will eat thy dainty meats and drink thy mead; but if a fool sitteth at the head of the table, they will turn and listen to a wise man in a lowly seat. Choose not too many friends; only an empty house is open to everybody.'

Thorsten likewise spake to Frithjof: 'My son, honour the gods. Though their dwelling-place is in Disirsaal,

they see everywhere, even into the hearts of men. As the flowers are gladdened when they look up to the sun, so is a man's heart when he thinketh of the gods. Honour the king: it is needful that there should be one master in a kingdom; the bright day hath one sun, but the darksome night hath many stars. The people is the kingdom's sword against the enemy: one man may take the sword by the hilt, but many grasping it by the blade shall wound themselves. Son, thou art strong, and strength is the gift of the gods. Nevertheless, be not proud of thy strength: for a bear hath the strength of twelve men, yet one man taketh him. Many a one that stilteth himself up with pride, cometh down to walk on crutches. Death is sure to every man: his might faileth and his strength dieth with him, but his fame liveth after he is gone, and sweet is the savour of good deeds.'

Then after the two old friends, king and thane, had counselled their children, they gave commandment to be laid side by side in two mounds on the seashore, where the murmur of the waves might hush them in their sleep. And it came to pass soon after that they closed their eyes and died. Never, all his life, had King Belé faced fight without the trusty Thorsten at his right hand; and even in death the thane went with him down to Hel's dark kingdom.

They which go by the mounds to this day hear oftentimes strange murmurings like far-off voices. Some say that it is nothing but the wash of the sea upon the beach, or the wind blowing through the crisp brown grasses on the cliffs; others lift a finger and say, 'Listen, King Belé and his faithful thane are whispering in their sleep!'

Then Helgi and Halfdan began to reign in Norroway, ruling the kingdom between them.

But Frithjof went away to take possession of his inheritance of Framnäs: three miles of farm and pasture bordered by the sea. Birchwoods crowned the heights:

on the slopes waved yellow barley and rye, tall as a man; sleek herds browsed in the lush green meadows; on the plains the woolly sheep slow drifted, white as the cloud-flocks in the sky; the lakes were full of fish, the forests of broad-antlered elk. Twelve pair of chargers, bridled storm-winds, champed impatient in their stalls; their manes knotted with scarlet, their hoofs bright with iron. The mead-hall, built of pine, would seat six hundred men. Holm-oak benches and tables were ranged round against the walls. A black, glossy bearskin, with a mouth of scarlet, and silver claws, lay thrown across the chief seat at the end, where Thorsten had been wont to sit; and on either side were carven in elm the images of Odin, All-ruler, and Frig the god of rain and sunshine. In the midst of the hall was a hearth of polished stone, whereon was always a merry blaze, sweet-scented of the resinous pine-wood, and above it a great chimney, so wide that at night one might look up and see the stars twinkle. Against the walls hung suits of mail and arms enough to furnish a host of men; well filled were the cellars with good ale and mead, and the chests in the store-rooms were heavy with booty.

But greater riches had Frithjof than these, for he inherited three far-famed treasures.

The first was Angurvadel, bright as the northern light, the wondrous sword made by the dwarfs, the hilt whereof was gold, and on whose blade were written mystic Runes which none might read. In time of peace the Runes grew dull and pale, but in the battle-day they blazed forth red as blood and fierce as fire.

Next was a golden arm-ring, wrought about the hoop with pictures of the gods, and in the midst a glittering ruby. Lame Wayland the smith made it for the first of Thorsten's race. But a Viking named Soté stole it from Thorsten, and taking ship hasted to Britain. Thither Thorsten pursued him, King Belé also bearing him com-

pany. On the rocky shore they found a cavern wherein was a mighty tomb. Thorsten and Belé looked in and saw a fearful vision of the black ship of the Viking, that moved and shimmered like to flame. Upon the vessel's mast, in a robe of fire, sat a skeleton scouring a sword-blade to get the blood-stains out, but all in vain; and on his arm of bone there shone the bracelet. Then they knew that Soté was dead, and that this was his spirit: and King Belé said, 'Let us both go in;' but Thorsten answered, 'Nay, shame it were for two to fight with one.' Then went he in. King Belé listened and heard the clash of swords, and horrible wailings which cannot be uttered. Then came a long and fearful cry; then silence. Thorsten came running out, white as a stone, with cold dews upon his face; but the ring was on his arm. What had happened King Belé never knew, and Thorsten would not tell. Once only the thane spake of it, and said; 'Would rather I had died than bought the ring so dear.'

The third great treasure was the ship Ellide. It was in likeness of a dragon, with golden head and open jaws at the prow; the belly thereof was scaled with blue and gold; and it ended at the stern with a twisted tail of silver. The planks of the ship were not joined by the shipwright, but had grown together. It had black sails, bordered curiously with red, like to a dragon's wings; and when they were outspread the ship flew over the calmest sea as though before a storm. One of Thorsten's forefathers, when out at sea, picked off a sinking wreck an old man with green tangled locks like seaweed, and brought him home, warmed him at his fire, and gave him mead. Not knowing who he was, he would have sheltered him through the night; but the old man said that it was time to be away at sea, and vanished, none knew whither. That was the great god Ægir, the sea-ruler: he sent the ship for a present for befriending him.

Those were the treasures of Frithjof.

Frithjof came to the mead-hall to the funeral feast. Twelve champions sate round his board. At his right hand was the fair-haired Björn, bright as a flower among withered leaves. There in the wine-cup, Frithjof and Björn sware fellowship for life. Then silently all drained the mead-horn to the memory of good Thane Thorsten. The Skalds came in and sang the praises of the dead.

Helgi and Halfdan sate in judgment by the gravemound of their father. To them came Frithjof, sailing across the sea in Ellide his dragon-ship, Björn and his companions with him. Lightly stepped Frithjof from the ship, and coming into the circle of men thus spake: 'King Helgi and King Halfdan, are we friends, even as our fathers were? I crave a boon of you. I am not of kingly race as ye are, and might have waited till with my strong hand I had won a kingdom for myself, made myself your equal, and then, with a crown of red gold on my head, come and proffered my request. But love of the land and the throne is strong in me, and I would rather stay and fight for Norroway, to keep her kings in safety on the throne, and her peasants secure within their homesteads. Wherefore I pray you give me Ingebjorg to wife. Have we not grown together from childhood, till love has made us part and parcel of each other? Surely King Belé willed it so in training us together. Here, by his mound I ask it: beneath the earth he hears me: let it be according as he willed.'

Helgi's face grew dark, and with a sneer he answered: 'The thane's son, bred upon my father's alms, would seek to mate with Odin's line! Bounty is wasted on a bondsman. Raise a peasant from the dunghill, and he will want to elbow thee from off the throne. Kind it is of thee to offer to guard my people and my land. Know that the king is the people's shield. Cease from presumption, and perchance, for my father's sake and the odd liking he

bare to thine, I may find room for thee among my hired servants.'

Frithjof laughed bitterly, and to his sword cried, 'Wake, Angurvadel!' The good blade leaped from the scabbard, blood-red its runes. But Frithjof said, 'Helgi, I cannot smite thy black heart from its bone-house; thou art son of my father's friend.' Then went he to a tree where Helgi's shield of gold and brass hung upon a bough, and at one blow of his sword cleft it in twain. 'That was well struck, good Angurvadel: back to thy scabbard and dream of war till I awake thee next.' Then whilst Helgi and his men stood silent, cowering for fear, Frithjof cried scornfully, 'Birth! Lineage! He says we are not equal! Look at the sons of Odin's line, trembling before the thane!' Angry he gat him to his dragon-ship, and crossed the sea-ways home.

Far away north dwelt old King Ring, gentle as Baldur, wise as Mimir. His people loved his silver hairs; his ear was ever open to their cry; the wronged he righted, the distressed he comforted. No war-ships anchored in his bays, but merchant-ships came thither from all lands to barter. No war-steeds trampled down the standing corn on the peasant's land. Ring dwelt in peace, the father of his people. From every home prayers went up continually to Odin for his welfare. But King Ring's wife was dead, and he had mourned her long, till, being desolate, and his folk urging him, he looked to find a mother for his dead wife's child, and a queen for the comfort of his people. And hearing the fame of Ingebjorg, who men said was gentle as she was fair, the king sent messengers with costly presents to woo her from her brothers.

But King Helgi spake austerely to the messengers, and bade them wait three days for an answer, whilst he sought auguries from the entrails of falcons and horses new-killed upon the altar-stone. On the fourth day Helgi returned

from communing with the priests, and said to the messengers, 'Many victims have we slain to learn the will of the gods, and the augury of them all is, Nay. King Ring must be a man of evil heart: he is displeasing to the gods: I have no will but theirs.' Halfdan said merrily, 'Tell old Greybeard to come himself, and see how quickly we will help him on his horse again.' And with that they turned and left the messengers without so much as a farewell or a courtesy.

So the messengers returned to their king and told him how they were treated. King Ring pushed back his golden seat and stood upright. He said, 'Old Greybeard *will* go himself.' Then strode he to the courtyard, and smote upon the great brazen war-shield of the land that rusted there upon a lime-tree. Quick gathered he his warriors, and filled the bay with war-ships, numberless and terrible.

Helgi was afraid and knew not what to do when he learned that King Ring was coming to fight him. But he took Ingebjorg and shut her up in the temple of Baldur for safety; for Baldur's temple is safe against unhallowed feet amongst all Northmen. Moreover, Helgi prevailed upon old Hilding to go and intercede for him with Frithjof and to persuade him to come and help them against King Ring.

Hilding found Frithjof playing chess with Björn, at a board with gold and silver squares. Frithjof greeted his old tutor gladly, but would not listen to his message: he poured out a horn of mead and bade him refresh himself whilst they finished the game.

Then Hilding said, 'O Frithjof, cease to be angry with Helgi and Halfdan. Haste to help them, for King Ring cometh with all his men to fight against us.'

Frithjof made as though he heard not. 'Björn, here is check to the king. Will you save it with the pawn? But what is a pawn, a paltry pawn, that it should save the king?'

Hilding, well knowing for whom the speech was meant, said, 'My son, be not high-minded: Helgi and Halfdan may be weak against King Ring, but against thee they are strong enough to lay waste thy house and take thy land.'

Frithjof laughed: 'So Björn, you would have my castle? Well, I have guarded it with my knights; so try your worst.'

Hilding said, 'Leave the game, Frithjof, for the game of war. Behold Ingebjorg weeps day and night in Baldur's grove. Let her tears intercede with you.'

Frithjof cried, 'Björn! Björn! would you take my queen away? But the queen shall be saved!'

Frithjof left his game and stood up, and took Hilding by the hand. 'You have heard my answer. Go, tell Helgi, "The king is the people's shield," and I will not be his thane.'

Hilding answered, 'Son, I have done my duty; but I blame thee not.'

At sunset Frithjof led Björn to the beach where Ellide, his dragon-ship, pulled impatient at her cable. They got into the ship. 'Whither goest thou?' asked Björn. 'To Ingebjorg,' he said.

'What! To profane the grove of Baldur?'

Frithjof answered, 'I care not, and I dare. I must see Ingebjorg. I will see Ingebjorg. Friend Björn, the gods see everywhere. Baldur knows that my heart is clean of ill-intent. An honest heart defiles no temple. I will go.'

Baldur's grove was bounded by a wall which reached the sea. No man might enter that holy place on pain of death, save after sacrifice and purification by the priests. Frithjof heeded not: he climbed the steep wall by the sea, and came to Ingebjorg, who trembled for fear because he had profaned the grove. 'Fear not, dear Ingebjorg, but come, let us seek Baldur's pardon, and Baldur's blessing on our love.' Together they walked through the silent grove, and came into the temple and

bowed themselves before the altar of the god. When they arose a calm fell upon Frithjof's mind. Ingebjorg said, 'Dear Frithjof, they who worship here, being sanctified, may listen to the promptings of their hearts, for Baldur from his altar sheddeth peace. What wouldst thou do?' Frithjof answered, 'My anger against thy brethren is turned away. I will do all to make the peace save give thee up. I will go to Helgi in presence of all the people, will give my hand to him in friendship, and ask him to forget the past, to give thee to me, and to take the faithful service of my life.' Ingebjorg kissed him, saying, 'Go; they are Baldur's words and mine.' So he went upon the errand.

Three days passed by; then Frithjof climbed the wall again, and came into the grove to Ingebjorg. Pale and cast-down he came. She saw the answer in his face, yet asked him, 'It has failed?'

He answered, 'It has failed. Hear what I have borne with a patient and a steadfast mind. I came to them as they sate by the mounds; thousands were with them, taking counsel about the war. Meekly I said to Helgi, "O king, I have been hasty and impatient, and maybe have presumed too much. Let all the past be past. The enemy is near. Let us be friends. What do I seek? I ask thee to make thy sister happy and our land strong against the foe. Give me Ingebjorg, and bid me fight against this Ring or any man. By Thor! you shall see how strong my arm is." All the people urged him, saying, "Give him thy sister, for there is no better mate for her in all the Northland." Then spake old Hilding long and wisely, urging him, and even Halfdan thy brother, sitting at his side, turned round and likewise spake for me. But Helgi sat listening to their words and mine as a stone upon the altar listens to the pleadings of a victim. He would not take my hand, nor yet refuse it, but sat still as an image. There was silence. He cannot speak without a

sneer: he said, "I am well-nigh minded to make friends. Forced by sore need to buy my friendship dear, I would be fain to give my sister to a thrall's son; but never to him that has profaned the sanctuary. Perchance it is not true; yet I have heard how one brake into Baldur's temple, and defiled his holy grove. Is this so? Answer me—was it thou?" Up rose the people's cry, "It is not true! Frithjof has not done this abominable thing!" My Ingebjorg, it was hard to answer; to turn the people's clamour in my cause to hate; to lose thee, almost won. But I never thought to lie. I answered, "Unbidden I climbed into Baldur's grove, since Ingebjorg was there. Where she is I will go, in Asgard or in Hel, and neither man nor god shall keep me back. Yet hearken; I defiled not the temple of the god; judge ye, for lo I entered it burning with hate—peace fell on me there, and thence, straightway, I came to thee with gentle words which Baldur put into my mind." Then I became accursed in men's sight, and folk drew back and shunned me like a leper. No longer any raised his voice for me. Helgi said, "Death is the penalty, but my judgment shall be as gentle as the god whose temple you have polluted. Away in the western islands dwelleth Yarl Angantyr, who paid us tribute till King Belé died; now he holdeth fast his gold. Men say he sleeps upon it as the dragon Fafnir did upon the treasure. Go, wrest the tribute from him. If you bring it, well; if not, return no more." Such, Ingebjorg, is my sentence. Men think it just and merciful. Ellide swims at anchor yonder, and I go.'

'And leave me, Frithjof?'

'Nay, sweet one, nay, I will take thee with me. Come, where none shall point the finger at thy mate, and say, "Profane!" and shudder and turn aside. See, Ellide spreads her wings all eager for the sea. Come to Yarl Angantyr's islands. He was my father's friend, though Helgi knows it not, and he will welcome us.'

'And wouldst thou break thy word and not bring back the tribute?'

'Never fear but we will send Helgi back his dross, and be for ever free of him. Come!'

'O Frithjof, I was to blame. My heart goes with thee, but I cannot come. Helgi is in my father's place. I dare not disobey him. It is theft to steal the happiness forbidden; not less so when it hangs within our reach, but only harder to refrain from plucking it.'

'Hast thou no other word for me?'

'Go, Frithjof, alone. I will not have men say of thee, he lurked about and stole his wife and fled lest he should face her brother.'

Heavily turned Frithjof away. 'Proud daughter of a king, I go alone: farewell.'

'Proud? Aye proud; but only proud of thee, dear Frithjof.' She came and leaned upon his breast and covered him with kisses. 'Do I not love thee, Frithjof, that thou wouldst go away without a kiss, whilst I shall sit and weep till thy return? Go, with a brave, strong heart, and trust in me.'

Then Frithjof felt that she was right, and he kissed her and drew forth the armlet of Soté and set it for a pledge upon her arm. So they parted; and he gat him to his dragon-ship and sailed away.

When Frithjof had been many days at sea, the wind blew cold, the hoar-frost whitened deck and spars, the rigging grew stiff with ice, and the oarsmen's hands were numbed with cold. The clouds piled black and brooded down; the sea, moved from its depths, rolled in great tossing hills, and seethed and roared. Furious the storm-waves leaped upon Ellide to swamp her. The good ship quivered with the blows, and lurching, shook herself, then fearless swooped down the yawning water-valleys, and darted up the green sea-hills. Afar they saw the storm-fiends riding on a whale; one like a white

bear, the other the great storm-eagle, fanning the tempest with her huge black wings. They are the sea-witches Heyd and Ham; and it was Helgi who sent them to raise this storm to swallow up his enemy. Then Frithjof took the tiller in hand and steered straight on the fiends. 'Help me, brave Ellide; show thyself the sea-god's gift. On, on, with all thy speed.' And when the good ship heard her master's voice, all her deck-planks creaked as she flew on and smote the whale with her bow so mightily that he sank into the depths; and the storm-fiends were left tossing on the water, till the sea-weed tangled them and the storm went down. The sun shone out, the sea grew calm and blue, and Frithjof anchored off the island where Angantyr dwelt.

Yarl Angantyr was feasting in his castle. He looked out of his window and said, 'That is Thane Thorsten's dragon-ship Ellide.' Then arose Atli, fiercest of his Vikings, and said, 'If this be Frithjof, I will know if there be a spell in his sword as men have said.' The battle-madness came on Atli as he went forth to fight.

Frithjof had landed with twelve of his men. They had brought food and kindled a fire, and being very tired, sate them down on the beach to eat their meal. Atli came haughtily, and called with a loud voice, 'Choose! Fight, flee, or yield!'

Frithjof answered, 'We are men already wearied with fighting the sea; but we will neither flee nor yield.' With that they fell to and fought, till Frithjof, with Angurvadel, cut Atli's sword in twain.

'There is witchery in thy sword,' cried Atli.

Frithjof said, 'Try my hands then,' and flung away his sword and wrestled with the Viking. Back he bent the big man like a reed, and held him arched upon a balance; till he overcame his quivering sinews and flung Atli heavily upon his shoulders.

Kneeling on his enemy's breast, Frithjof said, 'Had I

now my sword I would still that tongue of thine, that it should no more boast itself against tired men.'

'Fetch it. I will not stir. Valhalla for the brave! for you to-morrow, for me to-day.' So spake the Viking.

Frithjof fetched his sword, but Atli quailed not. He drew the blade, and the fierce runes shone red; the Viking stirred not, but with a quiet eye awaited death. Frithjof put back his sword into its sheath, and taking Atli by the hand, said, 'Man, arise; thou art too brave to die: let us be friends.' So they went together to Angantyr's castle.

Frithjof marvelled at the richness of the mead-hall. The walls were hung with gilded leather curiously wrought with flowers. The hearth was marble. White tapers in silver candlesticks shone everywhere like stars. There was glass in the windows of many colours: the doors had locks. In the chief seat, on a chair of silver, sat Yarl Angantyr, clad in armour of gold and steel. From his shoulders fell a purple robe sprinkled with silver stars. The meats were served in silver dishes. Many warriors sate round the board, and when Frithjof entered all rose and hailed him, and having drained the mead-horn to his honour, led him to a seat on Yarl Angantyr's right hand.

The Yarl said, 'Son of Thorsten my old friend, thou art welcome.' Then Frithjof told his story, and wherefore he had come; told of his love for Ingebjorg, and the sentence laid on him by Helgi.

Angantyr answered, 'Never yet paid I tribute to any man, but I gave King Belé of Norroway many gifts for friendship's sake. As to his sons, I know them not; and for tribute, bid them first unlock my coffers with their swords. But I will give a gift to thee for Thorsten's sake. I loved him, and his son is dear to me.' Then he called for a purse, and his daughter fetched one which she had broidered with needlework and precious stones. On it was the likeness of a castle in a forest, with golden

beasts among the trees, and it was fringed with pearls. Angantyr filled the purse to the brim with gold, and gave it to Frithjof, saying, 'Take it: it is thine: a gift of welcome to my friend. Do with it as thou wilt. Only abide with us for a while.' So the good-hearted Yarl persuaded him to tarry on from day to day, till whilst he lingered winter passed and springtime came. Then, longing for his home and Ingebjorg, Frithjof pushed Ellide into the sea and stood for the Northland.

Seven days he sailed the sea; then looking out afar he saw the land; a long blue line of cliff and hill, soft as a cloud betwixt the earth and sky. His heart beat fast, for he was nearing home; and as the blue waxed grey he strove to make out Framnäs, the dwelling of his fathers—looked for its birch-crowned heights, its mellow fields dotted with flocks and herds. But as he looked the view faded; a mist came over the sun and dwelt on sea and land. So he ran Ellide to shore, and coasted till he reached the well-known creek and heard the waterfall leap down the hills of his home to the sea. He beached the ship, and with a glad heart set foot on the misty shore, and took the path up by the cliffs.

His homestead gate was gone. His home was gone. There was a wild and a waste where Framnäs was. He trode on ashes everywhere. Black ashes heaped on scorched grass: trees cindered into black stumps of arms where they stood: ruin and blackness—that was Framnäs. And in the midst a neap of charred timber, and stone cracked and powdered white with fire—that was his mead-hall. His favourite hound, half starved, crept up and licked his hand. His horse came neighing for some corn and thrust his nose against his master's fingers.

That was Frithjof's welcome home.

There had been a great battle with King Ring. Halfdan fought bravely, but was beaten; Helgi took flight, and as he fled fired Framnäs betwixt him and his pur-

suers to keep them back. Then Belé's sons had begged for peace. Ring bade them choose whether they would give up the land or give him Ingebjorg to wife. They had given up their sister. King Ring had wedded her and taken her away.

Old Hilding told him: Hilding that would not lie. He said, 'I saw her wed. They set her on a black horse; she, white as a ghost upon a thunder cloud; and led her to Baldur's temple. There she fell down and made her prayer to Baldur so pitifully, that all which heard her wept. She alone wept not. But I—I know. Often by night when she has deemed herself alone, I have heard her walk and weep, and call upon thy name, and wrestle with her grief. The stricken sea-mew dives that none may see her bleed. She said, "Baldur hath brought all this to pass because we profaned his temple." "Heaven pity *him*," she said; "for he will live, but I shall fade and die." Yes. I saw them wed; and when the Skalds had done their songs, Helgi caught sight of your armlet on her cold white arm. With an oath he snatched it from her and set it on the arm of Baldur's statue. Straightway I drew my sword: fury made me strong; I could have cut him down in the temple where he stood. But she laid a finger on my hand, and whispered, "Good friend, forbear: Allfather sees and knows; leave judgment unto him."'

Frithjof said fiercely, 'Allfather judgeth by the hand of man. The gods put vengeance in our hearts to do their will. Beware of me; I am harmful to friend and foe: henceforth I am a firebrand on the earth.' So the berserk madness fell on Frithjof.

In Baldur's temple they kept the feast of the longest day. Though it was midnight, the sun lay dusky-red upon the mountains. A ruddy twilight glimmered through the grove; within the temple the pine-fire

crackled on the hearth. Priests in white bearskin robes stirred the wood-pile, and made the sparks fly up. King Helgi in his royal robes stood sacrificing before the altar. Suddenly there was a noise at the temple-gate, and a sound of voices.

'Björn, keep the door; let no man pass alive!'

Frithjof and his men pushed their way through priests and people to the altar.

Then cried Frithjof, 'Helgi, I have done your bidding: I have brought the tribute; but I will first be requited of you. You have robbed me of home and wife; and now, before Allfather, you shall answer for it. Nay, seek not to skulk away; I have tracked the rat to his hiding place and stopped his hole. Here, by the light of Baldur's flames, uncovered by shield, we will fight together with sword, or knife, or hand-gripe.'

In terror at his fierceness Helgi slank down against the altar and cowered upon the altar-steps.

Frithjof cried, 'Pitiful coward, my sword despises thee!' He took the heavy purse of tribute money, flung it full in Helgi's face, and stunned him there, saying, 'Take thy tribute!' and spurned him with his foot. Then to the threatening priests, 'Put up your sacrificial knives, you wool-clad mob; lest our thirsty swords mistake you for the victims, us for priests.'

Then perceived he the armlet upon Baldur's arm, and he said, 'By your good leave, dear god, lame Wayland forged it not for thee. That ring is Ingebjorg's and I will have it!' Fast was the ring upon the arm; but Frithjof pulled and plucked until he tare it off; when lo! with his violence the statue fell into the fire. The fire leaped up and lapped it in its arms; the flames rose high and licked the rafters of the roof, until the temple was ablaze and the gold plates of the ceiling melted and dripped gold upon the floor. In vain they made a chain of men to the sea, and passed buckets of water hand to hand to

Frithjof mounted on the roof. The flames would not be quenched. A wind arose and the grove took fire; dry with the summer heat, bough kindled bough, and when the morning brake, grove and temple were a smouldering heap of ashes.

Frithjof in horror gat him to his ship, and put to sea. He saw the smoke go up to Odin to accuse him, and he said, 'There is no hope for me, and no forgiveness for my sin. A wanderer will I be. The sea is free. There will I dwell. I have no home; but thou, my grim dragon, henceforth shalt be my Framnäs; no wife—be thou, my black-winged Ellide, my bride.'

Then came Björn and touched him while he mused. 'See yonder! Helgi with ten war-ships gives us chase.' Quick he forgat his sorrow, and put the ship about, and made ready his men for fight. But Björn was very cool; while the rest shouted the battle-cry and clanged their weapons, he sat still upon the oar-bank watching. Presently the ten ships sank like stones, and all on board were drowned save Helgi, who contrived to swim ashore. And when Frithjof and his men marvelled greatly, Björn laughed aloud; he said, 'I bored holes in them last night. Ho! Ho!'

Thenceforth Frithjof and his men became Vikings and roved the seas. Very strict were the laws which he made for his champions. No man might take shelter from storm or sun, by night or day. The deck was the Viking's bed, a shield his pillow, the sky his coverlid. His sword must be short to bring him near his enemy. The Viking never furls sail in a storm: the hurricane carries him the way he would go; the force of the storm helps the arms of the rower. He shall protect merchant ships, but they shall pay him tribute; the merchantman is a slave to gain, but the Viking's steel is worth as much as his gold. Booty shall be shared by lot without murmuring; all shall share it alike, save their chief; for him the

glory alone sufficeth. The Viking shall board the enemy's ship to fight; and he that yieldeth so much as a hair's breadth shall be thrust out of the company. The plea for mercy shall be heeded: he that giveth up his weapon is no more an enemy. No man shall dress his wounds until the fight be done; battle-scars are the ornaments of the Viking.

Three years fought Frithjof, unconquered through all seas, till victory cloyed on him and he grew sick of spoiling. A lonely man, the longing grew and strengthened in his mind—'If I might look upon her face again!' Fierce fighting lulled it for the time, but ever it came back strong and stronger. So at last he turned the good ship's head to Northland, and like an eagle, Ellide stretched her black wings and sped as though before a storm.

King Ring kept Yule-feast in his hall. The winter of old age had snowed his hairs, yet noble was his countenance. Beside him at the board sat Ingebjorg his queen, pale and drooping as a lily-flower. There was clamour in the hall from noisy warriors merry over the mead-cup, mingled with the sound of pipe and harp.

On the beggars' bench against the door there came and sat an old man bent with age, wrapped from head to foot in a tattered bearskin. He laid aside his staff and rested on the bench. A bluff old warrior, the bully of the board, now blustering in his cups, came up to jeer the beggar-man for the others' sport. The beggar-man's eye kindled, and in a moment he took the warrior by the middle betwixt his hands, twirled him head over heels, and set him on his feet again.

Then said King Ring, 'By all the gods, that is a strong old man! Come hither O stranger! Who art thou? Whence comest thou? What is thy name, thy country, and thine errand here?'

The old man answered, 'Sorrow nurtured me; want is mine inheritance; my last lodging was a wolf's den. Once I rode a winged dragon. For years I have ploughed green fields, yet left no furrow, reaped no crop but salt. Now in mine age I have journeyed far to hear thy wisdom, which is famed throughout the North.'

The king said, 'Thy grasp is strong; thy voice is clear. Thou art not old. Wherefore, throw off thy disguise that we may know our guest.'

Then Frithjof threw off his bearskin, and behold a young man, bright like Baldur, strong of limb like Thor, golden his hair as sunshine. From his shoulder a blue mantle fell; his coat was girded with a silver belt whereto a sword was slung; and on his arm were many rings of gold.

Did anyone know him? In the queen's cheeks the colour came and went like the red north-light flushing the snow-fields. But King Ring gave no sign.

There was a blast of horns, and serving-men bare in upon a lordly dish the wild boar on bended knees, served whole, and decked with garlands in Freyr's honour. And when the dish was set upon the table, King Ring laid his finger upon the boar's head and thus spake: 'Helgi and Halfdan have I conquered, and hereby I vow by Freyr, whose is this feast and offering, that Frithjof likewise I will overcome.'

Frithjof upstarted, wrathful and fierce. 'The man you speak of is my friend. I swear I will protect him with all I have and am!'

The king smiled gravely. 'Stranger, whoever thou art, I like the bold of speech. Be our guest through the winter. Nay, deny me not.' Then spake he to the queen to fill the cup of honour and bear to him.

Trembling she poured the yellow wine into the gold-ringed horn. Scarce could she bear the cup, her hand was shaking so that the mead was spilled upon the floor.

Her eyes fastened on the pavement as she bare it, so the stranger should not see her face; but he saw the blushes coursing on her fair white arm. He took the cup and drained it at a draught. Long sate the warriors at their carouse, to the sound of merry music and the brave songs of the Skalds.

While Frithjof tarried with King Ring the sea froze hard; and the king commanded swift horses to be yoked to his sledge, for he would go upon the ice-plain.

'Go not,' said Frithjof; 'for treacherous is the ice-bound sea; Ran, wife of the sea-god, lurks beneath the brittle ice to drag men down.'

Ring answered not, but cried to his steeds, 'Away, and show yourselves of Sleipnir's breed!' So saying, he shook loose the reins, and away went the coursers athwart the ringing crust of ice. Then quickly Frithjof fastened his skates upon his feet and overtook the king's sledge and skated circles round about it, whilst for all the horses might do they could not so much as pass him. Suddenly brake the ice: sledge, steeds, and king went down into the sea. But Frithjof came to the hole, planted his skates firmly in the ice, and griping the horses by the manes, dragged sledge and all upon the ice again.

'Stranger, that was a brave hand-grip,' said the king; 'Frithjof himself could not have done better.' Frithjof laughed, for he deemed that the king knew him not.

While yet he tarried, springtime came. The birds made music in the new-leafed trees; loosed from their frost-bonds the brooks sang merrily down the valley-sides; and pink as Freya's cheek the rose brake from its coverlid. And as it befell, the king and queen would go a hunting. With them went a multitude of their people to join the sport. Frithjof went also. Like a star upon a fleecy cloud the queen seemed on the proud white horse that bare her. Her hunting-gown was green and gold, and in her hat blue feathers waved. Frigga, earth goddess—

Rota, the bright-eyed battle-maid—was scarce more fair than she.

Now, in the midst of the hunting the king grew weary, and fell back from the rest with Frithjof only for company. Afar they heard the baying of the hounds, and the frightened game breaking through the wood; saw the falcons soar and dart for prey, and the herons swoop in their circles. And lagging still they came into a lonesome place, shut in three sides by trees, but on the fourth was a yawning chasm rent in the cliff—above, a mighty rock-side, and far down the narrow cleft uprose a steam and the faint noise of water plashing in the abyss.

For a while neither spake; but at the last King Ring gat off his horse and said, 'O stranger, I am weary; I would rest awhile.'

Quick answered Frithjof, 'Nay, rest not here. There is danger in this lonely place; I cannot stay with thee. We will hasten to the castle. There shalt thou rest.'

The king said, 'Not so; slumber cometh at the will of the gods, unlooked for, but when sought avoideth us.' So he prevailed on him, and Frithjof came down from off his horse, and sate under a beech-tree against the trunk; he spread his mantle on the ground, and the old king lay down. On Frithjof's lap he laid his head, and closed his eyes; gentle was his rest, as a child's upon his mother's knee, fearing no evil.

Frithjof looked on his quiet face and sat a thinking. This was the man that stood betwixt him and Ingebjorg. His fingers wandered scarce knowing to his sword-hilt, but feeling it they shrank away again.

There came two birds and sate in the tree, the one coal-black, the other white as snow. The black bird sang:—

> Quick! t'will never be known nor seen,
> Kill the king and win the Queen;
> For she is thine with plighted kiss,
> And a man may take his own, I wis.

But the white bird sang:—

> Allfather sees, and he will know
> The man that slays a sleeping foe;
> Odin can make thy winning vain,
> Or turn thy patience into gain.

Then, fingering at his sword with trembling hand, he drew it forth and shuddering flung it from him. It turned glittering in the air, and dropped far off among the dark trees of the wood. Immediately the black bird fled down to Nastrond, the night kingdom; but lightly the snow-white bird unfolded her wings and soared up into the blue sky, making music in her flight, sweet as the sound of harpstrings.

And the old king awakened upon Frithjof's lap and said, 'Sweetly, O my friend, have I slumbered; for a pleasant thing it is to enter the shadow of sleep guarded by a brave man's blade. But where is thy sword? Where is Angurvadel, the lightning's brother?'

Frithjof answered, 'It availeth little; there are other swords in the Northland. But it is not well to commune always with Angurvadel. Sharp is its tongue; it thirsteth evermore for blood, for a dark spirit from Nifleheim dwelleth in the steel. It hath no respect for slumber nor grey hairs.'

Then said the King, 'Frithjof, I know thee. When first thou didst cross my threshold I knew thee; yet I made as though I knew thee not, for I had heard of Frithjof, called of men the Wolf, Frithjof which defiled the sanctuary, the strong-handed one that brake up shield and ship and temple when he willed. And I said I will know this man and prove him. Frithjof, I slept not; I put my life into thy hand to try thee. I know what came into thy mind. Friend, I have tried thee and thou art true. Yet one thing passeth my knowledge—how, being thus true and brave, thou couldst have stolen into my house in beggar's guise to rob me of my wife.'

Frithjof said, 'The gods well know I never came to rob thee of her—only to look upon her face. Had I the mind to have taken her, who should have hindered me? But I have my punishment to bear. Thou hast not wronged me. She pledged herself to me; she was mine; but Baldur took her from me for my sin and gave her to thee. For this same cause men shun me—call me Wolf of the Sanctuary; the very children shrink away when I draw near; Baldur, the gentle god that loveth all things, hateth me, and hideth his face before the blackness of my sin. So I became a wanderer and ploughed the dreary sea. But the longing came on me to see her yet once more; I strove against it, yet I came—a beggar, to look on her sweet face—disguised so that none, not even she, might know me—then without word or sign to go back to the waste wide sea unto my banishment. Thou madest me throw off my beggar dress, and day by day didst urge me to remain, till, deeming myself unknown to all but her, and since my wish was stronger than my will, I yielded. I wronged thee not in word nor thought. But I have stayed too long. To-morrow I will go away, and thou shalt never see me more. Good Ellide! thou hast rested all too long. To-morrow thou shalt spread thy wings to the breeze, and bathe thy dusky bosom in the welcome sea. The thunder-storm, the roaring hurricane, and the battle-din shall be to me, henceforth, instead of any sweet voice of wife or child, until I die in fight and go up to Valhalla.'

Tearfully answered the grey old king: 'Dear friend, I blame thee not for loving her. Who that hath seen her can help loving her? I call to mind the fires of my youth, even though in my age the embers have grown cold. Go not away. Stay with us yet. I am old; my days are few; bear with me for a little while until I die; then shalt thou take the queen and all my kingdom for her dower.'

King Ring sat on the morrow upon his royal throne;

Ingebjorg, all white and trembling sat at his side, knowing what had come to pass. His warriors stood round about.

Haggard and worn came Frithjof into the hall. He had not slept.

He said, 'The livelong night I have thought and thought. It must not be. I cannot stay; I cannot look on her and love her not. I dare not stay; I dare not stay to break her peace. But I have brought the arm-ring back. When I am gone I pray thee put it on her arm —'tis hers; 'twill comfort me to know that she is wearing it. One other word, and then farewell. Go not with Ingebjorg to the sea-shore, lest after all I cannot tear myself away, and Angurvadel drink my life upon the sand; or lest, dying on the sea, my very bones drift back to whiten on your beach.'

He turned to go.

The king cried, 'Stay! It behoveth never a warrior to be bowed down like a woman. What is death for a king to fear, save only lest he meanly languish out his days and die on straw! To me, alas, it was never given to rise to Valhalla from the battle-plain. The unkind Valkyries chose me not. But Frithjof—I am old and thou art young. To me Death's message cometh, O my friend—to me!'

So saying, he thrust his sword into his breast, and whilst his life-blood spouted to the ground he signed to Frithjof to come near, and placed Ingebjorg's hand in his. Then lifted he the mead-horn high, and with a cheerful countenance cried, 'I drink to my land, to the old Northland. Hail ye gods! Hail warriors of Valhalla! I greet you; and I come!'

So died King Ring of the Northland. The people made his grave-mound, and the bards sang of his wisdom and his gentleness.

After this, the folk gathered to the Thing-stone to choose a king; and with one voice the people said, 'Yarl Frithjof shall be our king, for Ring's boy is too young.' But Frithjof took the little gold-haired child and set him on his shield, and lifted him aloft in sight of all the multitude, saying, 'This is your king! Howbeit, until he be grown I will protect the land, and hold the throne for him. Here swear I never to seek my own, but his in all things; and if I am false may Baldur smite me with a yet more heavy punishment!'

The child sprang fearless from the shield to the ground and took Frithjof's hand; and the people shouted: 'The boy is king! Yarl Frithjof keeps the throne for him, and he shall wed with Ingebjorg.'

But Frithjof went away alone and said within himself—'How can I wed with one so sweet and fair, when I am yet accursed in the sight of the gods and before the people of my land?' Then he took his journey and came to his father's grave-mound by the sea-beach. There he sat all one weary night praying Baldur to take the curse away. And Baldur showed him a sign in the darkness; for lo! he saw a temple in the air, which shone out from the gloom, rose up, and waned away. So Frithjof hasted back, and came to King Ring's palace; and he sent for artificers in wood and stone, and smiths that could work in gold and silver, and he began to build a temple to Baldur after the pattern which he had seen in the vision. All the while it was building he took no pleasure in hunt, or feast, or sound of harp. And when it was done, behold a grove of trees which no man planted sprang up round about, and shut it in on three sides; on the fourth the sea washed the rock whereon it stood, and pictured the temple on its shining face.

The temple was the wonder of the land. It had a gate of brass inwrought with curious work. Huge pillars upbore the roof—a mighty golden shield. The

altar was one hewn stone of Northland marble, bright-polished, and carved with Runic words of power. Above it stood the image of Baldur wrought in pure, shining silver.

When all things were ready, Frithjof went up to the dedication of the temple to make atonement. As he came into the hall twelve youthful priestesses in white robes walked two and two about the altar, singing a sweet hymn to Baldur. Frithjof listened, leaning on his sword, and as they sang, his soul grew restful; his burden seemed to pass; and from above the altar the god shone mildly as the moon upon the peaceful night.

With stately tread came forth the grey high-priest, hoar in the service of the god; a man of lofty stature, whom age had not bent; noble his visage, stern of line, yet from his eyes was shed a kindly light.

Thus he spake:—'Son, welcome to the holy place. The strong man cometh tired home.

'Baldur has set a parable in the heart of man. To every child Hel gives back Baldur; but as the child grows, Hoder the blind god comes; then steals Loki into his heart, making Hoder's hand to swerve, and Baldur is slain, to dwell thereafter only as a shadow in his grown-up mind. A man must fight with Loki even as the gods must do. What careth Baldur that thou heap up stone on stone? Thrust Loki from thee, if peradventure the bright god may dimly shine within thy heart again as in thy childhood's days. He careth not for sacrifice, save only sacrifice of that which keepeth him from thee.

'Wherefore lay neither horse nor falcon on the altar, but lay thereon thy pride, thine anger, and thine hate of Belé's sons. Why dost thou hate them? For their pride of birth? Thou art prouder of thy strength; yet it is not thine. The gods gave to thee thy strength, and to them their lineage. Have they wronged thee? Forgiveness is very sweet to Baldur. But thou hast been

high-minded and high-handed with them. They have suffered; suffered wasting of their kingdom; their women mourn for warriors sleeping in the great war-mounds; their sister was carried away; Helgi died wretchedly——'

Frithjof stopped him. 'Helgi dead—nay, nay, kind priest! O say not he is dead, and I forgave him not!'

'Helgi is dead. Whilst yet this temple was a-building he warred with the Finns, and laid waste their land. On a cliff there stood an ancient temple to Yumala. No man had entered it for years, because of a saying among the people, "He that first goeth in shall meet the god upon the threshold." Helgi cared not. Rashly he sought to spoil the temple of them which he called heathen—men which worship God beneath another shape. The rusty key would not turn in the lock. He tore away the pillars, and shaking down the door, ran in. The heavy idol tumbled from its rotten seat, and fell on him, and crushed him in the temple's dust.

'Frithjof, forgive the dead. Lay by all bitterness and malice against the living. Make peace with Halfdan. Be at peace with all; so peace shall come into thy heart. Baldur hath spoken through me his priest.'

Then Frithjof beheld and saw Halfdan standing timidly upon the brazen threshold, fearing to come in. Quick loosed he the sword from his side; and he took the sword and his golden shield and laid them for an offering on Baldur's altar. And he ran to where Halfdan stood, and put his hand in his. The men spake not. Their cheeks reddened; and as they looked into each other's eyes, neither man saw, for that which gathered in his own.

So they were made friends; and the high-priest took off the curse from Frithjof.

Then was heard a sound of music, and from behind the altar, lo there came a band of maidens clad in bridal

white, and foremost among them walked Ingebjorg in an ermine robe. She came to Halfdan, meekly to do his bidding in her father's place. He took her hand and said, 'My sister!' and he took Frithjof's hand and said, 'My brother!' then placed them hand in hand. The old priest lifted up his hands and blessed Frithjof and Ingebjorg in Baldur's name, and the temple was lightened all about with the shining of the god.

GRETTIR THE STRONG.

I. THE WINNING OF THE SHORT SWORD.

GREY old Asmund had his homestead and farm-land at Biarg in Iceland. His elder son Atli was good natured and well-spoken, so that most men liked him; but Grettir the younger son was a froward boy, chary of speech and mischievous in his play; his father cared little for him because of his unruliness, but his mother Asdis loved him well. Grettir was slow of growth; at ten years old he was stout-built but short of stature for his age; his hair was red: his face broad and much freckled. Many were the scurvy tricks that he served his father in his boyhood. Being set to tend the geese, he twisted all their necks. And one day being told to rub his father's back before the fire he caught up a spiked wool-comb from off a seat and harrowed it up and down old Asmund's shoulder blades. Asmund danced up on his feet, mad wroth, and cried, 'Thou good for nothing, foolhardy brat! What shall I do with thee?' 'Give me a man's task, not a milksop's,' answered Grettir. 'Well, then,' said his father, 'go out upon the mountains and tend the horses. Among them is Keingala, the weatherwise dun mare. Keep an eye on her; so shalt thou know when to turn the horses out and when to keep them under cover; for when Keingala will not stay out to graze a storm will surely follow.'

'That is manly work,' said Grettir, 'but I shall put little faith in the mare.'

So the boy went out upon the mountain-neck to watch the horses. But about Yule-tide, when the snow lay on the ground and the wind was stinging cold, Grettir's limbs grew numbed and bitten; for he was but ill-clad and little hardened to the frost. There was scarcely a bite of grass for the horses; yet Keingala would go out early every morning, no matter how rough the weather, and idle about in the windiest place she could find, grubbing the scanty herbage; and there was no getting her home before nightfall. Then Grettir thought that he would cure her of this trick. So very early one morning he came to the stable and found Keingala champing away at her fodder just as though she was not always eating the whole day long. Grettir leapt on her back and set to work with a sharp knife to flay the mare. Keingala kicked and bounded about the stable; but Grettir mastered her, and though twice she flung him off he flayed her hide in a strip from wither to flank. Then he set open the stable doors and drave the horses out to pasture. Keingala browsed about, then bit at her back, then browsed again; but finding it perilous cold, trotted back to stable long before noon. Grettir drave all the other horses under cover, locked the stable doors, and came back to the house.

'What ails now?' said Asmund. 'Rough weather is coming, I trow,' said Grettir, 'for Keingala will not bide out to graze.' 'Aye,' answered his father, 'we shall have a storm to-day.' But never a storm came. The next day Grettir drave the mare out again, but not being able to endure the cold she soon came into the stable, and Grettir went home to sit by the fire. But the day went by and there was no storm. 'This is passing strange,' said Asmund; 'the mare never deceived me heretofore.' And next morning he went himself with Grettir to turn

the horses out. But when he began to stroke the mare and the skin came off beneath his hand, he was the maddest man, and he called his son every ill name that came to his tongue. Grettir said naught, but stood and grinned.

When Asmund told Grettir's mother of these things she said, 'Poor lad. Whose fault is it? Thou seest how he turns out everything he does, and yet thou settest him to work. Who then is to blame?' So for all that, and many such like mischievous deeds, his mother Asdis contrived to keep the peace betwixt his father and him.

As Grettir grew up he waxed very strong and big of body; but he was always short for his age, though stout and well-knit together. For a while he had not skill to turn his great strength to account; but as he began to mix with older lads in wrestling games it was plainly seen that he had more might than most men.

Asmund had been wont to ride year by year to the Thing, with his friend Thorkel who ruled Waterdale; but one year when Thorkel came to fetch him Asmund pleaded that he was grown too old for wayfaring. Then said Thorkel, 'Let Atli go instead.' But Asmund answered, 'I cannot spare him from the farm-work, for he is of use to me; Grettir will do nothing for his victuals, but he has some wit; maybe he can take my place in setting forth the laws. Let him go with thee.' So Grettir rode forth with Thorkel and his men.

On their way over the moors they laid them down to sleep one night, leaving their horses to graze about with saddles on. Next morning Grettir found that his horse had been rolling, for the saddle was slipped round under the horse's belly, and the meal-bag, which he had left strapped to the saddle, was gone. One of Thorkel's house-carles, by name Skeggi, also missed his meal-bag in like manner; and after they had both searched some while about the

moor Skeggi picked up a bag which he said was his. However that might be, Grettir claimed it and would have it. So they fell to wrestling about the bag, and Skeggi getting the worst of it drew his axe and smote at Grettir; but Grettir caught the axe by the handle as it came down, wrested it away, and drave it into Skeggi's brain. Then he took up the meal-bag, and rode after his fellows. Skeggi was missed presently from the company; and when some asked Grettir what was become of him, he said that he had seen the man lying on the moor with an axe in his head, and he trowed some rock-troll had done it. Howbeit to Thorkel he told all about the fray. Thorkel said, 'This has fallen out badly, for Skeggi came of good kindred; nevertheless I will do all I may for thee. But consider now whether thou wilt still go to the Thing and take the chance of matters or turn back home.' Grettir said he would go to the Thing; and the end of it was that Skeggi's kindred made a lawsuit, and Grettir was doomed to three years' outlawry and a fine. Thorkel paid up the fines for him, but Grettir had to go abroad. Yet he took it lightly enough, and on his way home from the Thing, when he came to Sledgehill he caught up a great rock in his hands and flung it down upon the grass. There it lies to this day. Folk call it Grettir's Heave, and wonder how any man could have lifted it.

Asmund was vexed enough when Grettir came home and told what had befallen, and deeming his son good for nothing, he bade him go off with skipper Haflidi, who had a sailing-vessel lying up Whiteriver. He gave the lad neither victuals nor goods for the voyage, nor any weapon to take with him, but packed him off with just the clothes on his back. Grettir had few friends, because of his rough temper, and of those he had, when he wished them goodbye, not one bade him come back anymore. So he set out and trudged off towards Whiteriver; but he had not gone far along the road when his mother came run-

ning after him and drew a sword from beneath her cloak, saying, 'I grieve to see thee so ill-provided, my son, but thou shalt not go quite empty-handed; here is the sword of Jokul my grandfather. Often it stood him in right good stead. Take it, and may it prove as trusty a friend to thee!' Grettir was very glad to get the sword, and now recked little of his lack of goods. So having taken leave of his mother, he came on to Haflidi and entered the ship; and soon afterwards the mariners hoisted sail and stood out to sea. But the skipper could get him to do nothing. Grettir would not labour about the ship, he would not haul a rope, nor help shift a sail to please anybody, neither would he buy himself off his work; he just went and made himself a comfortable corner in the bow, where he could be sheltered from the wind; there he lay down and would not budge. All day long he would lie there jeering at the shivering sailors, whose fingers were blue with cold from handling the frozen ropes. By and by there came a storm, and the crew had to bale night and day without ceasing; but Grettir only lay and mocked them. The men got so mad that they vowed they would pitch Grettir overboard; and in sooth they would have tried to do so, only Grettir turned his wit against Haflidi, and made sport of him as a 'shouting skipper,' which pleased the sailors greatly. But the storm getting worse, the ship laboured so much that it sprang a leak; and what with the sea coming in below and the waves dashing in above, the balers could not keep the water under. Then Grettir rose up lazily, and after he had stretched himself, came aft, and taking a cask began to bale. He filled the tubs and handed them up to another man to empty, but he filled them so full and so quickly that first two men, then four, and at last, as some say, eight men had to stand above to keep him going. So from that time the sailors held Grettir in high esteem. After the

storm ceased there was much thick weather, and one dark night the ship ran on a rock off the island of Haramsey in Norway. Thorfinn was lord of that island, and at daybreak seeing their peril, he put off a boat and brought the skipper and his crew safe ashore, together with the most part of their goods; and in a little while the ship went to pieces. The mariners abode a week with Thorfinn, and then went away southward overland to their homes.

But Grettir remained at Haramsey. Thorfinn gave him food and lodging, but could make little of him, Grettir being so short of speech and caring neither for Thorfinn's fine table nor yet for his company. Grettir liked better to loiter about at his own will than to follow Thorfinn. He made friends with Audun, a farmer who lived near, and would go and idle about his farm or sit in the homestead and chat with him from morning till night. Late one evening when Audun was walking home with him, Grettir saw a fire break forth from a mound, and he said, 'What place is that? In our land night-fires upon the ground betoken a hid treasure.' Audun answered, 'That is the barrow of Karr the Old. He was Thorfinn's father, and in his time held only a small farm; but since his death he has so haunted the place that he has driven out all the farmers from their lands, and now the whole island has come to belong to Thorfinn.'

Grettir said very little, but next morning he got some digging tools together and told Audun that he was going to Karr's mound. 'Let it alone,' said Audun; 'for Old Karr will surely do thee a mischief.' Grettir said he would take his chance of that, and seeing him determined to go, the farmer accompanied him to the mound. There Grettir set to work, and digged all day; and it was not until nightfall that he reached the rafters of the barrow and began to break them through. Then Audun earnestly besought him not to go into the barrow to provoke the

hatred of the wicked dead; but Grettir heeding nothing, called for a rope, and letting himself down thereby, went in and began to grope about. The place was very dark and noisome; but as he stumbled hither and thither over horse-bones which strewed the floor, he ran against the arm of a chair. Old Karr sat in that chair; around him were heaped his treasures of gold and silver, and beneath his feet for a footstool was a chest of silver. Grettir recked nothing for the skeleton in the chair, but gathered up the treasures and took away the chest from under Old Karr's feet and brought them to the rope to make them fast. Suddenly he felt a mighty grip upon the shoulders that held him fixed. He knew that the barrow-dweller had wakened from his slumber, and he let go the treasure, and turned and wrestled with the hideous dead. Now up, now down, the two, close locked, reeled all about the floor, till the place echoed with their scuffle. Over the horse-bones, across the chair, each sought to trip the other up. In turn each fell upon his knee; but at last, with a great noise, Grettir flung Old Karr upon his back, then drew his sword, smote off the barrow-dweller's head, and laid it at his thigh that the dead might come to life again no more. Then went Grettir to the rope and having fastened the treasures thereto, called out for Audun. But the farmer had fled, hearing the noise of the wrestling, and deeming Grettir certainly doomed for death. So Grettir climbed the rope by himself, and then hauled up the treasure. This he set upon his back, and hied off to Thorfinn's mead-hall, and there he spread out all the things upon the table—all save a short sword, a better weapon than he had ever seen. This he held still within his hand because he coveted it. When Thorfinn asked concerning the treasure Grettir answered, 'Many little matters happen late of an evening,' and told how he had broken open Karr's barrow and fought with him. Thorfinn

answered, 'No man beforetime has had will or courage to break open the barrow, and I blame thee not; for wealth is wasted in the ground; but how came that sword within thy hand?' Grettir told him, and prayed that he might keep that sword for himself. But Thorfinn answered, 'It is an heirloom of the house. My father would never give it to me while he was alive, though many a time I besought him. Thou must first do some famous deed to win that sword.' So Thorfinn took all the treasure to himself, and the sword he hung over against the head of his bed.

Now at Yule-tide Thorfinn went off to the mainland, he and all his men, to hold Yule-feast on his farm Slys-firth, leaving no men folk save Grettir in his homestead. And it came to pass that twelve berserks which had been outlawed by Yarl Eric, ruler of Norway, for their misdeeds in ravishing men's houses of their goods and of their womankind, trowed this to be a good time to plunder in the island of Haramsey, and accordingly they came sailing thither on Yule-eve.

Grettir espied them come to land, and guessing pretty well what their errand was, went down on the beach to meet them. He said, 'Good sooth, but you are in luck's way, my masters, for Thorfinn is gone with all his folk to the mainland. There is only the goodman's wife and daughter at home, and there is plenty of ale to drink and of treasure to carry away. So come along with me to the homestead, and I promise you we will make good cheer.' The berserks being not a little pleased to find a man so ready to their mind, followed Grettir into Thorfinn's house. The goodwife stormed and raged at the men as they came swarming into her clean and new-decked hall; and she said to Grettir, 'Wretch! did not Thorfinn befriend thee in thy need, and save thee from shipwreck, and dost thou now requite his goodness by bringing robbers to the house?' Grettir sharply bade her hold

her tongue, and bring the men dry clothes, and set out the tables for a feast, saying that they were all come to spend Yule there, and meant to make merry. And Thorir, chief of the gang, spake, saying, 'It is no good squealing, mistress, nor making ado. I warrant that amongst us we shall find a better mate for thee than Thorfinn, and as to thy daughter and the house-women, we will spouse them all before we go. We have wives in every haven.'

'Spoken like a man,' cried Grettir, 'and of a truth they have small cause for bewailing.' The poor scared women ran weeping from the hall. But Grettir went down into the cellar and fetched up the strongest ale; with great draughts of it he plied the berserks till they made din enough in the hall. Far into the night they kept up the carouse. They could scarce make too much of Grettir, and would have him swear to join their fellowship; but he put off the oath till next day, saying, 'Ale is another man, my masters; but if ye be like-minded to me in the morning I shall freely join your company.' Now when the robbers were grown heavy with drink, Grettir said that he would lead them to Thorfinn's cloth bower, which was moreover the place where he kept his treasure. Well pleased at this they all followed him to a strong store-room, a little without the house. Grettir took in a light and showed them many rare and precious things; but the men were noisy in their cups, and fell to tumbling about and pushing one another as they looked at the treasures; and in the midst of the riot Grettir slipped out and made fast the door with lock and bar. They, thinking that the wind had blown the door to, paid no heed.

Away ran Grettir to the house and hammered at the goodwife's chamber-door. She, deeming it to be one of the berserks, screamed out in affright. But he said, 'Fear not, mistress, it is I. I have trapped them in the

store-room, but there is no time now to talk. What weapons are there in the house?' 'Now God be thanked,' answered Thorfinn's wife, 'for old Karr's weapons are here; they will not fail if thine heart does not.' Therewith she brought out a big barbed spear, a helmet and a byrni, and the good short sword. Then Grettir armed himself, and came to the store-room just as the berserks were hewing down the door. He ran in amongst them, and slew two as they were coming down the steps. The others caught up logs which they found upon the green, and defended themselves as best they might; but they soon found with how strong a man they had to deal. There Grettir slew four of them, and when the rest took to flight he followed, and killed two which sought shelter in a barn, and two more that had hidden themselves in the boat-house on the beach. The other two got off in the darkness, but were found next day lying among the rocks, dead of their wounds.

When Thorfinn came home and learned how well his winter-guest had guarded his homestead, there was nothing wherewith he would not have rewarded him. Indeed by this exploit Grettir's name became renowned over Norway, for the berserks had been the terror of every homestead in the land. But Grettir would have only the short sword of Old Karr; and, much as Thorfinn treasured it, he gave it to him freely.

II. THE SLAYING OF BIORN.

Now as soon as the winter was past Grettir took leave of Thorfinn, who was very loth to part with him, and entered into a ship and came to Salft, in Heligoland, where he abode with a man of high birth named Thorkel

One of Thorkel's chief men was called Biorn, and being a blustering fellow of quick temper, who moreover thought no one so good as himself, he and Grettir were mostly at variance about some matter or other. Now it happened when winter drew on, that a very fierce bear took to roaming abroad at night on Thorkel's lands, and grew so savage that he spared neither man nor beast. Biorn, making great boast of his prowess, must needs go off to hunt this bear by himself. To that end he tracked the beast's lair, and went and lay down beside it, covered with his shield, to await the bear's return. The bear soon came up, roaring horribly, and clawed away his shield; whereat Biorn fell in such affright that he took to his heels, and ran home as hard as he could go, followed so perilous close by Bruin that he felt the hot breath of him all the way, and a close shave he had of it to get the house door to betwixt his heels and the bear's muzzle.

There were plenty to jeer at Biorn over this ending to his exploit, and Grettir in particular with his taunts stung him not a little: but Biorn seemed as though he heeded nothing, having already made up his mind to be repaid. And a few days after, when Thorkel and he and half-a-dozen more went to harry the bear, Biorn caught up Grettir's fur cloak and cast it into the bear's den. Grettir saw it lying there, and saw the bear sit growling over it, but he trowed after all it was no such great matter. He waited till evening came, and when the rest turned about to go home, Grettir went along with them for some way, but presently made excuse that the thong of his leggings had come undone, and he must stop and fasten it. So he lagged behind till the others were out of sight, and then went off to have ado with the bear, not choosing to share the honour of the conflict with anyone.

When he got to the den's mouth, he slipped the loop of his short sword over his wrist and went straight in.

Up rose the bear, and rushing to meet him, smote at Grettir with one of his paws; but Grettir hewed off that paw with his sword. Then the bear must needs lift up the other paw wherewith to strike, and in doing so down he dropped upon the stump, which, being shorter by a foot than he reckoned for, rolled him over into Grettir's arms. Howbeit the beast got upon his hind legs and wrestled with him as a man would do with another. Grettir caught him by the ears and held his head back so that he could not bite: the bear struggled hither and thither, and bent him to and fro, but none the more would Grettir leave go his hold on the bear's ears; till in the tussle they rolled together out of the lair, and, still griping one another, fell headlong over a ledge of rock on to a stone-heap below. The bear being heaviest fell undermost, and greatly bruised he was withal. Grettir soon ran his short sword into the heart of him, and then taking up his tattered fur cloak and the bear's paw came home to Thorkel who sat drinking with his men, and flung them down upon the table.

Then Thorkel began to fear for Biorn's life, and sought to make friends betwixt the two men, offering Grettir money to make the peace. But Biorn bade him put his money to better use, saying he was quite ready to deal with Grettir himself if need were, for that it behoved every block of wood to look after his own chips. Neither would Grettir take the money. Notwithstanding, at Thorkel's intreaty he agreed to do nothing against Biorn so long as they both remained with him.

But in the spring Grettir bade Thorkel farewell, to journey northward, and after wandering about all the summer, came to the island of Gartar, which lies in Drontheim firth. Biorn also went away as master of Thorkel's ship, and made a voyage to England; but on his return the vessel, being driven by stress of weather up Drontheim firth, came ashore upon the island where Grettir

was. Grettir soon found Biorn and renewed the quarrel, saying, 'Now, thou braggart jester, save thou wilt fight I will rag thy coat for thee as thou didst mine, and dub thee coward beside.' And when Biorn found that he could not talk himself out of the mess, he went off with Grettir and fought, and in that fight got wounded so badly that he presently fell dead.

Yarl Svein heard of Biorn's slaying from Hiarandi, brother of Biorn, who was in his service, and straightway summoned Grettir to come before him and answer for the man's life. But Grettir went and saw on his way his friend Thorfinn, who, being glad to have opportunity to repay Grettir's defence of his homestead, came with him to Yarl Svein, offering to pay the blood-money. When the matter came to be sifted, it was found that Biorn had provoked Grettir in many ways; and what with this, and Grettir's having rid the land of the berserks, whereof Thorfinn failed not to remind him, Yarl Svein put such a price upon the deed as he deemed befitting Biorn's kindred, and Thorfinn told out the money. But Hiarandi would not touch the gold: he said, 'Nay, I will either avenge my brother, or go after him the same road.' So there being nothing else to be done, the meeting broke up. But from that hour Thorfinn got his kinsman Arnbiorn to go about with Grettir, for fear Hiarandi might come upon him unawares. And a good thing it was; for one day as the two walked down a street, Hiarandi, who with five other fellows had hidden himself in a courtyard, rushed out with axe uplifted in both hands and drave it down at Grettir's head; Arnbiorn had just time to thrust Grettir a little on one side to avoid the blow, but as it was the axe came down on his shoulder and cut him a grievous wound crosswise, against the armpit. Grettir drew his short sword, and in a moment hewed off Hiarandi's arm; and so smartly did he and Arnbiorn behave themselves, that Hiarandi and four of

his men were quickly slain, and the other one ran off to tell the tidings to Yarl Svein.

The Yarl was very angry at this new slaughter, and summoned the Thing, and set forth the accusation against Grettir. Thorfinn came up again, bringing many of Grettir's friends; and these all pleaded that he might either be allowed to make atonement or to leave the land. Grettir also urged that he did not seek the fight, but that it was either his life or theirs. Then said the Yarl, 'Far better it had been thine, for thou wilt always be brawling, and if thou livest, many a man will get his bane of thee.' Howbeit, after much talk a respite was granted to Grettir till the spring, in order that they might hold a court to settle the matter at Tunsberg, where Gunnar, brother of Biorn and Hiarandi, dwelt.

Meanwhile Thorfinn interested himself mightily in his cause, and so did Bessi, son of Skald-Torfa; and when they were all come to Tunsberg in the spring, Grettir found his brother Thorstein Dromond, who was a court owner there, and he likewise promised to help him. But Yarl Svein somewhat delayed his coming, and one day as Grettir sat drinking alone in an alehouse, the door was burst open and in ran Gunnar with three other armed men to take vengeance on him. Grettir caught up his weapons and set on fiercely. He struck down two of them with his short sword dead upon the floor, and then rushed furiously upon Gunnar to drive him to the threshold. Gunnar was driven back because he could not withstand Grettir's strength, but he backed fighting all the way, with his shield in front of him. But no sooner did he get to the door than Grettir slammed it on his hands, holding the door with his foot, so that Gunnar's shield and both hands remained within the room jammed fast in the doorway whilst his body was without. Then Grettir lopped off the hands at the wrist, so that Gunnar's shield fell within doors, and his body on the door-step, and straight-

way sallying out dealt Gunnar his death-blow. The fourth man fled away.

Now when Yarl Svein came to Tunsberg and heard of this he was madly wroth, insomuch that a man could scarce get speech of him. The Thing was thronged with men, and Thorfinn, and Bessi, and Thorstein Dromond said all they might, offering blood-money to boot, as much as the Yarl might doom. But Yarl Svein spake angrily saying, 'It is all too late to offer atonement or to seek respite for Grettir. Here has this man slain three brethren one after another, and it is idle to talk about breaking the laws by giving respite. It matters nothing how strong Grettir may be, or what friends he may have, or what he has done for the land. In this court all men are of equal esteem, and whatever it may cost we will have Grettir's life, and nothing short of it.' And the Yarl arose up and would listen to no more.

At that Thorfinn and Thorstein Dromond, and Bessi, and the rest of his friends took Grettir and went home to Thorstein's court, and began to barricade the place. And when Yarl Svein sent to them to give up Grettir they said plainly they would not, for that he was not so greatly to blame, and one fate should befall them all. Thereupon the Yarl gathered his men together, and there would straightway have been a fight, had not men of repute in the town come and prayed him not to carry the matter so far as to do battle with his own people and make a war which would stop no one could say where. So, by this his mind being somewhat changed, an agreement was made whereby heavy fines were to be taken for the slayings, and Grettir was to be banished from Norway, and go off to Iceland. Thorfinn cheerfully paid the money and parted from Grettir in great friendship, giving him gifts of raiment for himself and caparison for his horse, and bidding him come and see him whenever he came to Norway again. After that Grettir

took ship with some chapmen, and came to his father's house at Biarg in Iceland.

Old Asmund had prospered in all things whereto he set his hand, and was become one of the greatest farm-holders in Midfirth. Moreover Asdis had borne him another boy, whose name was Illugi. But Grettir cared not to abide in the homestead; he was always wandering about, getting into some brawl or other. He sought out his old companions who had been lads when he was a boy, and picked quarrels with them, from sheer desire to show his manhood; and when he found that of those who used to get the better of him in a wrestle by reason of their elder years, not one could stand against him now, he waxed so overbearing that there was no dealing with him. He deemed himself well matched to fight any three men either with hand or sword, neither would he flee from four; but against a greater number he would not fight of his own seeking.

III. THE CURSE OF GLAM.

Away up Waterdale was a homestead in a place called Shady-vale. It belonged to farmer Thorhall, and the most part of it was grazing land, for there was no man about that part who bred so much live stock as he. But he never could get a shepherd to stop with him. It was not that Thorhall was not a liberal-handed master and a pleasant enough spoken man; but the place was haunted. One man after another took the job, but they all threw it up in turn, because of what they heard and saw upon the downs after nightfall. Nor did it rest with hearing and seeing, for many got badly hurt into the bargain. However, one day Skapti, the Law-man, met Thorhall at the Thing and said to him, 'I know of a shepherd who will stop with thee; a big, strong man, a Swede, named Glam;

a terribly rough and surly fellow to have to do with; but if thou canst only put up with his ways, I'll answer for it he will keep thy sheep.' Thorhall said he recked nothing how uncouth the man might be either to look at or to talk to, so long as he could do this.

Not long after there came to Thorhall a great bluff man, with wolf-grey hair, and strange grey eyes with a queer glare in them. He said his name was Glam. Thórhall stared at him, and not without reason, for he had never seen so frightful a boor. He said, 'Wilt thou keep my sheep?' 'Aye,' said Glam, 'if no one meddles with me; but I am apt to be rough of temper when anywise crossed.' Thorhall answered that he should be left to have his own way, but told him that the place was badly haunted. Glam said, 'Am I a man to be scared by bugbears?' Thorhall looked at him and said truly that he did not think he was. So they struck the bargain together.

All through summer Glam watched the sheep upon the hills: he had a great lusty voice, and they all came running together at his hallo. But no one about the farm could abide him, because of his gruffness and ill-temper; least of all could Thorhall's wife. Glam was a dreadfully ungodly wight, with some loathsome oath or other always in his mouth. There was a church on the farmstead, but he shunned it like pestilence. For all that he kept the sheep well, and up to Yule-tide not a head was lost or strayed.

Now though folk feast abundantly enough at Yule-tide, it is well known that all good Christians keep fast on Yule-eve. But Glam came blustering into the house as if it had been any other evening, and cursing all the home-folk for a pack of fools, called loudly for his meat. Thorhall's wife durst not disobey him for the life of her, and after trying to persuade him to fast like the rest, and enduring much of his ill language, she brought him out

the food, saying moreover, 'Thou hast done a mightily evil thing; take heed nothing befall thee because of it.' Glam finished his meat and went out to fold the sheep upon the mountains, grumbling and swearing as he went.

The day had been greatly overcast and bitterly cold, and at twilight a great snowstorm swept over the place. Glam never came home that night. When it grew late and he did not come, the men about the house talked of going out to look for him; but it was pitch dark, and the snow-flakes fell so thick that a man could scarce see his hand before his face. Morning broke; still Glam did not come. Then they all made a party and fared abroad after him. They saw the sheep all scattered and strayed about the mountains; some dead, some huddled together against the rocks for shelter from the storm. But it was long before they found any trace of Glam. Late on in the day they came upon mighty foot-prints, big as cask-heads; these they tracked to a steep cliff side, whereabout the ground was all tramped down as though a great scuffle had gone on there. Rocks had been uprooted, earth and snow were churned to mud, which had frozen and marked the stampings of the wrestlers. Glam lay there, dead and blue and swollen, his wide grey eyes glaring horribly. Putting this and that together, they deemed that the haunter of Shady-vale had fought with Glam and killed him, but did not get off without mortal wounds, whereof he doubtless must have died, for he haunted that place no more. Glam looked so evil in his death-sleep that the men were adread of him; nevertheless they went and fetched horses and harnessed them to his body to drag it to the church. But the horses could not stir it that way, for all the road lay downhill. Another time the men came bringing the priest with them; but that day, though they searched from morning till night about the

place, they could not find Glam's body at all. The morning after, coming without the priest, they found the body, and the horses failing again to move it, the house-carls strove no more to bring it to the church, but made a cairn and buried it where it lay.

It was not long after Yule that the folk found that Glam did not rest quiet in his grave. He was seen of many about the farm in the dusk of evenings, and he took to riding the house-roofs at night fit to break them in. If a man had an errand after dark across Shady-vale, no matter how pressing, he would leave it till morning rather than venture in Glam's way. The hauntings lasted all the winter, but as summer drew on they ceased. Thorhall got a new shepherd that autumn from a distant part, a strong man called Thorgaut, who had the strength of two, but next Yule-day he was found lying against Glam's cairn with his neck broken; and the hauntings grew worse than ever. One morning when the house-wife went to milk the cows in the byre she heard such terrible noises and cracklings hard by, that she ran back screaming for fear; and straightway the whole herd took fright and began goring one another. The neat-herd went out to them but never came back; and when they found him he was lying on his back in the cow-house, with his neck broken, and all the cows were dead. Day by day Glam killed cattle and sheep and horses. Things came to such a pass that at last Thorhall would abide no longer on the farm, but gathered together all he durst go after, and fled away to spend the winter with his friends. Whatsoever live thing he left, that Glam slew; and every horse and hound that crossed the place met the same fate.

Next spring, as soon as the sun got power, Glam lay in quiet, and Thorhall came back to his farm; but it was as much as he could do to get servants to abide with him; and towards winter the hauntings began again as bad as

before. A girl on the farm was set upon and killed; and what to do Thorhall could not tell.

Now Grettir heard by chance of these strange doings, and making up his mind to search the matter out, set off and rode to Thorhall-stead. Thorhall gave him a hearty welcome, but bade him look well to his horse if he treasured it, for that none could keep a horse many days upon his farm. However, Grettir said that horses were plenty enough, and he would risk that. So they locked up the horse in a strong stable and went to bed. But that night Glam did not ride the roofs nor break open the doors, and at daylight the horse was safe and sound. The next morning it was the same; and Grettir began to think the tale of the hauntings an idle one; but the day after, when they arose and went out they found the stable shattered, and the horse lying dead outside the door, with every bone in his body broken. Then said Grettir, 'It is not too much to ask, as the price of my horse, for a sight of the man who did this.' So when night came he took a rug with him, and came to the stable, and laid him down in his clothes upon a locker, wrapping him from head to foot in the rug, but leaving an opening for his eyes. There was one strong beam left at the end of the seat, and against this he set both feet. All the rest of the place was a wreck, and the splintered door was only held in its place by broken fastenings. There was a light burning, and Grettir lay awake, but for a long time heard nothing. A while after midnight there came a great noise, a sound as of some one riding the roof-tree and digging his heels against the rafters till they cracked again; and the thatch came tumbling down by armfuls. Presently Glam came down off the roof and thrust the door open. He was monstrous big, and thick-set withal. When he stretched himself up his head reached above the eaves. He stood there glaring about with his awful grey eyes;

then he took the cross-beam of the house in his hands and shook it till the crazy, broken stable rocked. Grettir lay quite still. By and by, Glam, seeing a bundle lying on the seat, caught hold of the coverlid and pulled it. Grettir would not move, but set his feet faster against the beam and griped the rug in his hands. Harder pulled Glam, but the thing would not come away. Then he put both hands to it and dragged with all his might, and drew Grettir upright from off the seat. But Grettir held on to the rug till it rent asunder between them. While Glam wondered who it might be that could pull so hard against him, Grettir ran in beneath his hands, clutched him round the middle, and bent himself with all his strength to double him backwards. But Glam was stronger than he knew of, and stood it like a tree. Back he bore Grettir to the seat, and thence from place to place, till every beam and panel of the house was broken with their struggling. Then Glam sought to drag him to the door and out into the open. Against this Grettir strove with all his might, well knowing that outside he had no chance. But in vain he knit himself back and bowed the thrall's great body towards him. He felt that he was going, and could not save himself; he gat no foothold, and was being dragged yard by yard towards the doorway. Nothing could save him. Then he thought that if he must go it should be with a rush; and, from pulling against Glam, he suddenly drave forward his hardest and hurled him reeling back the way he was going. Unprepared for this, Glam staggered backward with a run, his head smiting the lintel of the door, and breaking the roof away, but the door-sill tripped his heels, and down he fell upon his back without the house, Grettir atop of him.

Just then the moon sailed up from behind a black sheet of cloud, and shone upon Glam's eyes. Hideously they glared up at the moon, and Grettir was dismayed

for the only time in all his life. He could not draw the short sword for the horrible staring of Glam's eyeballs.

Glam said, 'Little shall this encounter profit thee. For thy strength was not near come to the full, and would have increased twofold; but since thou hast met me it shall wax no greater. Moreover, ill luck shall cleave to thee in all things. Thou shalt become an outlaw, and a lonesome man; and in thy lonesomeness I lay this curse on thee—ever in the darkness to behold these eyes of mine. They shall follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and there shall be no hiding from them. That shall make it hard for thee to dwell alone. That shall lure thee to thy death.'

When he had thus spoken a cloud scudded past the moon and hid it; the spell that had lain on Grettir fell from off him; he drew forth the short sword and therewith hewed off Glam's head, and set it over against his thigh that thereafter the ghost might walk no more.

Then Thorhall, who had been watching afar off but durst not come nigh, came up and thanked God and Grettir heartily for this deliverance from the unclean spirit. And the two men took Glam's body and kindled a fire, and burned it to ashes, and they wrapped the ashes in the skin of a beast, and buried them in a place apart from the ways of men or cattle.

Soon after that Grettir took his departure, loaded with presents which Thorhall gave him, and rode off to Biarg. There he passed the winter at his home. But since that affray he was grown restless and shorter of temper than heretofore. He feared to be in the dark, and durst not go forth alone at night because of Glam's eyes which fastened on him. And from that time it passed into a proverb concerning them which see strange and horrible things in the darkness, that Glam has looked upon them, or that they have Glam sight.

IV. GRETTIR'S ILL-LUCK.

THERE lived in Ramfirth an exceeding strong man, named Thorbiorn Oxmain. He had a kinsman and namesake, a sailor, called Thorbiorn the Tardy, who had a very ill-natured tongue which was always wagging. Grettir bore no good blood towards either of them; for some while before Thorbiorn Oxmain had come up with his men and parted him and Kormak in a fight of some half dozen a side on Ramfirth-neck; and ever since Thorbiorn the Tardy had jeered him behind his back for giving over after blood had been shed, the more so because one of the men that fell in the fray was his brother Atli's house-carle, and no vengeance was taken for him. But time went on, and Thorbiorn the Tardy still made his jibes. Grettir, though he heard of it, cared not to seek out a man whom all knew for a braggart; and living far apart they had not met.

Now in the spring Grettir made up his mind to go over to Norway; for tidings came how Yarl Svein had fled the country, and how Olaf the Saint, who ruled in his stead, gave right good welcome at his court to men of prowess; beside which there was some sort of kindred between them, for Grettir's great-grandfather, Onund Treefoot, and Olaf's great-grandmother, Gudbiorg, were brother and sister. Many other men were likewise going to see how things would fare with them at King Olaf's hands.

There had never been over much love at any time betwixt his father and himself; yet Grettir seemed very loth to leave him now, notwithstanding his mind was set on going. For old Asmund was grown decrepit and bedridden; he had given up tending the farm, and had committed that and all other matters about the homestead into the hands of his eldest son Atli. Wherefore

it was with no light heart that Grettir took leave of the old man. But he bade farewell to his father and to Atli, and his young brother Illugi, and made his way to Goose-ere in Eyjafirth, where, having taken a passage by the next ship, he tarried with other folk waiting for it to sail.

Now Thorbiorn the Tardy also had a mind to go to Norway, and though many sought to hinder him from going in the same vessel with Grettir he heeded nothing, but made ready at the last minute, and came down to Goose-ere just as the ship was ready for sea.

One and another gathered round him on the beach to ask for tidings; but Grettir kept himself apart. Thorbiorn eyed him and laughed, and said to them which stood about, 'Tidings? Good sooth, there is naught to tell of any account. Old Asmund down in Biarg is dead, and high time too. Old dotard! Would you ask of what? Good friends, the chamber smoked, and smothered him in bed. I pray you laugh. A champion dead of chamber smoke!'

Nevertheless none joined his merriment. They said, 'If Asmund of a truth be dead, a good and worthy man is dead. But as for thee, see to it and beware lest Grettir hear thy words.' Thorbiorn laughed them to scorn, saying, "What reck I of Grettir? He must wield a sword more deftly than he did at Ramfirth-neck before I shape my words to please his mind.'

But Grettir had heard it all, and now walked up to him. He said, 'Thorbiorn, I will foretell thee a little thing. Thou wilt die neither of chamber smoke, nor yet of old age. But now for this time take back thy words, for I care not to have to do with him that mocketh at the helpless.' Then began Thorbiorn to brag aloud of his valour, daring Grettir, moreover, to fight, until, being taunted very sore, Grettir drew his sword and hewed at him. Only one blow he struck. Thorbiorn flung up his arm to

guard it, but old Karr's blade flashed through his wrist and through his neck, and hand and head fell down upon the beach. None of the folk deemed other than that the quarrelsome wight had gotten his just reward.

Then they all went on shipboard and sailed across the sea to Hordaland which lies in the south of Norway. But when they were come ashore Grettir heard how King Olaf was gone up to Drontheim; so he took ship again in a trading vessel northward bound to go thither.

They had hard weather, and the snow froze and fell stinging cold upon them; and it was so when they were come off a haven against Stead, that they had not wherewithal to make a fire. Then they lay to, and being starved with cold, they watched wistfully a homestead on the shore where a bright blaze flickered day and night. And at last Grettir's shipmates said to him, 'Thou art the strongest of us; wilt thou go ashore and bring fire aboard?' He answered, 'Aye, I will go; but see to it that ye all stand by me, whatever come of it.' And they said to him, 'Deem us not so shameful as not to uphold thee in aught thou doest for our sakes.'

Then Grettir threw off his clothes and slipped a rope about his middle, for those on shipboard to pay out, and taking with him a cask wherein to bring the fire, he leapt overboard and swam to shore.

The house they had seen was a house of refuge, built upon the strand for the shelter of mariners. The sons of Thorir of Garth, a man of great esteem in Iceland, had been driven into the haven by the stress of weather, and were carousing there with a dozen of their crew.

Grettir saw the house and ran in. There was a great fire burning in the midst, and all about was straw which had been housed there out of the snow. But Thorir's sons, seeing a great strong naked man, with icicles hanging from his hair and beard, trowed that he was a troll or some unearthly wight, and so set on and smote him with

the first things which came to hand, which were the firebrands from off the hearth.

Grettir recked nothing of their disturbance, nor would he fight with the men; he only wanted fire. He put the blows from off him as best he might, snatched a firebrand from out one man's hand, and made his way back to the ship. When he got aboard he looked towards the shore and saw no house, but only a great pile of flame; the straw had kindled in the scuffle and burned the house, and Thorir's sons, and all the men that were therein. The mariners seeing this shunned Grettir for the rest of the voyage; and at every place whereat the vessel stopped they noised abroad how they were not guilty of the mishap, but that Grettir had done it; until at last they put in shore, drave him from their ship, and would have no more truck with him. They told the people that Grettir had burned Thorir's sons in the refuge-house, and straightway turned him adrift and sailed away. So the folk on shore looked on him askance and would have naught to do with him. Grettir, caring for no man, wandered on alone to Drontheim to meet the king.

As Olaf sat in the council on a certain day Grettir came, making obeisance before the king. Olaf knew him for a kinsman, and being well minded towards him said, 'Art thou Grettir the Strong?' Grettir answered, 'So men have called me. But my strength availeth nothing to deliver me from an evil slander laid upon me, wherefrom I pray the king to give me quittance.' The king said, 'I have heard the tale told of thee; and I do not think that of thine own will thou didst burn these men. Neither do I see why thou shouldst not cast the slander from thee.' Then Grettir declaring himself ready to do whatsoever might hold good in law, the king appointed a day whereon he might clear himself by the ordeal of bearing hot iron.

Grettir, well pleased thereat, betook to fasting to pre-

pare himself for the trial, and when the day was come the bishop and much people gathered to the church, and the iron was made hot for him to bear in his hand. Greatly marvelled the folk to see his muscle, and the cords upon his limbs. But as Grettir walked through the midst of the church, there started up from the church-floor a boy of strange countenance, who pointed a finger at him and wagged his head, saying, 'Strange times these when every thief may free himself by calling for a trial! Are there ordeals, forsooth, for a man who burnt a half score guileless folk because they had fire and he had none?' Then Grettir could not withhold his anger, but clenched his fist and smote the boy behind the ear so that he fell upon the floor. But though they saw him fall, the folk which pressed forward could not find the boy's body; for it was an evil spirit raised up for Grettir's hurt. And there arose a great clamour in the church, insomuch that it was told the king 'Grettir is smiting all about him.' And the king came forth and said, 'Grettir, strength like thine is given to few men, but of a truth thine ill-luck passeth all things. Blame thine own heedlessness that this trial is stayed. I do not condemn thee; maybe thou didst not burn these folk, but I cannot have to do with so unlucky a man. Go away home. I will not hinder thee from tarrying in Norway through the winter, but I will see thy face no more; and in the spring get thee back to Iceland, for after this I can have no more to do with thee. I am sorry; but there is no dealing with ill-luck.'

Grettir was very down-hearted thereat; but in nowise despairing, he determined to go and seek out his brother Thorstein Dromond. On his way he fell in with a rich bonder named Einar, who had a wife and a fair daughter called Gyrid; and Grettir abode at his house through Yule-tide. One day in Yule there came certain berserks to Einar, chief of them Snœkoll, a big strong man, who challenged him to fight for his women. Einar was old

and past fighting, and Snœkoll stood before the door railing at him, and threatening him with many foul words. Snœkoll set his shield on end upon the ground while he talked, resting his mouth upon the rim of it. Grettir heard him, and came forth; he lifted his foot, and catching the tail of the shield with his toe, kicked it so hard that the shield flew up and reft Snœkoll's jaw asunder and tare his throat open. Then he drew the short sword and smote off the berserk's head. Seeing this, the other berserks fled.

When Yule was over Grettir travelled east to Tunsberg, and dwelt awhile with his brother Thorstein Dromond, and much good-fellowship they held together. One morning as the two brethren lay in their beds, Thorstein awoke, and saw Grettir's great sinewy arms lying outside the coverlid; and when Grettir waked he said, 'Brother, I deem it nowise strange that men cannot withstand thee, for never have I seen arms so huge as thine. Pity it is they were not more slender and more lucky withal.' Then Thorstein bared his arms and laid them alongside Grettir's. And seeing the gaunt thin arms of his brother, Grettir laughed loud and long. 'What arms! A pair of tongs! Sure, Thorstein, thou hast scarce a woman's strength.' Thorstein answered him, 'The day will come when thy great arms shall avail thee naught; but these lank arms of mine shall be strong enough to avenge thee.'

While Grettir tarried with Thorstein in Norway many ill things befell in Iceland. And first of all his father, the grey old Asmund, grew feebler every day, till, finding death draw nigh, he gathered his sons Atli and Illugi, and all the home-folk round his bedside. To Atli he gave his farm and all his goods, making him ruler of the household in his stead, charging the folk to obey him in all things. And he laid his hands on the head of Illugi his youngest-born and blessed him, saying that one day he should become a man of great prowess. Then he thought of Grettir, who

was far away, and he said, 'His life will be restless as a rolling wheel. A mighty man is my son, yet will his might be of little service to his kindred, for he will scarce find it suffice to deliver him from his own troubles.' A little after that Asmund died, and was buried in a church which he had built on the homestead.

Now Thorbiorn Oxmain was mad wroth to hear how his kinsman Thorbiorn the Tardy had been slain by Grettir; and since Grettir was out of the way, he determined to be avenged upon his brother Atli. To that end he made a league with Gunnar and Thorgeir the sons of Thorir of the Pass, who were likewise ill-friends with Atli; for they were in that fray on Ramfirth-neck, when Atli's house-carle was slain; and he prevailed upon them, together with six other men, to go and waylay Atli as he came home from a journey. Atli had but five folk with him, and when he espied Gunnar and his fellows, he would not take it that their errand was aught but peaceable, and so bespake them with the same gentleness which it was his wont to use to all men. When he had welcomed them all and asked their tidings, he turned to Gunnar, saying, 'There is that house-carle of mine which fell in the strife at Ramfirth-neck by thine hand. I have made no stir about it hitherto, well knowing that when I should next meet thee thou wouldst offer atonement. Is it not so?' Gunnar answered, 'It ill befits the men of Biarg to talk about atonement, with the blood of Thorbiorn on their hands. We are here to take our vengeance for that slaying, and we heed no other suit.' Atli said, 'Your pardon, but I am not the man to answer in that cause, neither art thou a suitor in it.' 'But I choose to take up the suit, and thou shalt answer for it,' said Gunnar; and therewith he cried on his men, saying, 'Lay on stoutly and fear nothing, for Grettir is not with them now.' Then, there being no help for it, Atli drew his sword, and though they were but six to eight, he and his folk defended themselves so

well that they presently slew Gunnar and Thorgeir, and three of their fellows. They made peace with the other three and let them go.

When Thorbiorn Oxmain knew how the affray ended, he took up the suit for the slaying of the sons of Thorir of the Pass, and it was tried before two wise judges at the Thing. Atli had many friends, and was known to be a peace-loving man; it was shown moreover that he was attacked and fought only to defend himself. Wherefore he was adjudged only to pay half fines. So far as words went the peace was made, but the judgment rankled in Thorbiorn's mind.

Thorbiorn had a somewhat unruly house-carle named Ali, self-willed and sullen of temper; and Thorbiorn worried him greatly about his work, whereas the man would only work in his own way. When Thorbiorn found fault with him he got idle and would do nothing at all, till, being always at loggerheads, Thorbiorn one day beat him soundly, and sent him about his business. After that the man came over to Biarg and asked Atli for work. Atli said to him, 'Are you not one of Thorbiorn's men? Go back to him. I have plenty of workmen.' The carle told how Thorbiorn had turned him away and besought earnestly to be taken on, for that he had no food and no friends, and knew not where to go. Pitying his strait, Atli gave him work, and the man was grateful; and getting only kind words from his new master, he worked so hard and so well that soon there was not a better labourer upon the farm. However, in the summer, Thorbiorn, hearing how well the man was going on, got fretful, and rode off to Atli at Biarg, saying, 'Atli, thou art always working some despite against me. Why hast thou harboured this man of mine? I meddle not with thy workmen; give him up to me.' Atli answered, 'I understood that thou hadst cast him out. But if he is thy man take him, I want him not.'

Howbeit the house-carle would not go back with Thorbiorn, but ran into the house and hid himself, and prayed that he might not be given up. Thereupon Atli said, 'I will not hinder thee from taking him, but he shall go with thee of his own free will or not at all. I will not have him dragged from my house.' Then Thorbiorn said, 'Mark you well, that man is mine; and I forbid him to work here. Next time I come after him perchance it may be in no friendly way.' Atli made answer that threats would not frighten him—he was mostly to be found at home, and he had a welcome for a friend and a sword for a foe. With that Thorbiorn rode off. On a wet day at the beginning of hay-harvest, when all Atli's men were out mowing, Thorbiorn came riding up to the door with his harness on and a barbed spear in his hand. It was about noontide, and there were no folk in the house save Atli and his mother Asdis. Thorbiorn smote upon the door, and then stole on one side and hid himself. Atli heard the knock, and thinking that it must be one of the farm folk with an errand, came to the door and opened it, but seeing how the rain poured down he went not out, but stood with a hand on either door-post peering all about. He saw no man. Suddenly Thorbiorn rushed out with his spear in both hands and smote it through the midst of him. Atli gave a groan and fell forward. Dead he lay before his doorway, and the rain rained on him there. Folk mourned for Atli, for he was good and wise and gentle. There was no more mowing done that day. Ali the house-carle came and wept bitterly, reproaching himself for his master's death. Asdis the house-wife sobbed and moaned, tearless, as the aged do. They buried Atli in the church upon the homestead, beside his father. But no blood-money was taken for him, since it was for Grettir to take up the blood-suit if he listed.

But this was not all that happened while Grettir was

away. Tidings came to Thorir of Garth how his sons had been burned at Stead, and he straightway rode off to the Thing, seeking vengeance. He would take neither money nor blood for atonement, but claimed that Grettir should be made an outlaw throughout the land. There was none to speak for Grettir, neither any that knew the rights of this house-burning. Skapti the Lawman said it was not rightwise for any to put their hands to a judgment until Grettir's story had first been heard. But Thorir was a man of might, a friend of King Olaf; Bishop Sigurd had hallowed his ship; most men befriended him; all feared him. So it fell out that when he pushed matters to the hardest none dared gainsay him, and the end of it was that Grettir was made an outlaw, and a price set on his head, the same as was wont to be done with the worst of robbers and vagabonds.

Now at the end of the summer Grettir took leave of his brother Thorstein Dromond. In great friendship they parted, and they never met together more. So when Grettir landed in Iceland he learned these heavy tidings; first, that his father was dead; next, that his brother, the head of the household, was slain; and last, that he himself was outlawed, without a hearing, for a deed he had never done. Yet he took his troubles lightly enough. He said, 'These are heavy mishaps, but maybe there shall come a time when other folk shall find themselves more forlorn than I am this day.'

V. THE HUNTING OF THE OUTLAW.

Somewhile Grettir abode in the ship, till he could get a horse to his mind. Presently he fell in with a merry fellow named Svein, who had a famous black mare very swift of foot, called Saddle-fair. Grettir stole the mare one night from Svein's home-field and bridled her, threw a black

cape over his clothes to disguise himself, and rode away. He never drew rein till he came to Grim Thorhallson's house. Grim was one of the six which fought with Atli against Gunnar and Thorgeir, and learning who it was, he welcomed Grettir freely enough, though in some fear of harbouring an outlaw. Svein missed his mare, and followed her from place to place till he tracked her to Grim's house. But Grettir told him a horse was not worth quarrelling about, and they had better be good friends; and the farmer, learning who it was that had taken her, made no more ado, but came in and stayed that night at Grim's; and a merry time he and Grettir made of it together, parting next morning in the best of fellowship, and Grettir kept the mare.

Afterwards Grettir rode over to the old farm at Biarg, and for fear of being seen, came there at dead of night. All were asleep save his mother, who was a light sleeper, and lay long awake. She heard his footfall and went down and let him in. She told him all the trouble that had come upon their house. Grettir said that he knew it all full well, but bade her be of good cheer, for that he would either better or worsen things before long. For a while Grettir abode in the farmstead, none knowing of it save the folk about the house, and they kept their counsel.

Now it came to pass at the end of hay-harvest, when Thorbiorn Oxmain and his son Arnor were down in the home-field binding the hay, that they espied a man ride over the meadow bearing sword and spear. Thorbiorn said to his son, 'Of a truth that is Grettir, Asmund's son. Wherefore leave the sheaves and let us meet him stoutly.' Thorbiorn's shield and sword lay among the hay. The lad bore a hand-axe at his side. Thorbiorn took up his weapons, saying, 'I will meet Grettir in front; do thou go round and come behind him, and drive thine axe with both hands betwixt his shoulders.'

Grettir got off his horse, and taking his spear loosed the

socket-nail which held the spear-head to the shaft, so that Thorbiorn should not cast the spear back again. Then he drew nigh and flung the spear; but the socket being looser than he knew of, the spear swerved in its flight, and the head fell down off the shaft upon the field. Thorbiorn ran upon Grettir and began to assail him furiously, that the lad might the better steal up behind his back. But Grettir chanced to turn his head, and seeing how things were, contrived to keep himself somewhat free to turn about, and when the lad was come within reach he swung the short sword round and drave it down into his skull. Then Thorbiorn smote at him, but Grettir put the blow aside with his shield, and lifting his hand clave Thorbiorn's shield in two, and the sword-point entered his brain; so Thorbiorn fell down dead.

Grettir sought all about the meadow for his spear-head, but could not find it; neither was it found till within the memory of old folk now living, by which token it is certainly known that Thorbiorn fell in that place, and not in Midfit, as some were wont to say. And for that cause the place is called Spear-mead to this day.

After this slaying Grettir went home to Biarg and told his mother how he had avenged Atli; but fearing to abide there longer lest he should bring trouble on her, he fared abroad, and sought shelter with one and another as best he could.

Now Thorod Drapna-stump took up the blood-suit for Thorbiorn, and with a great company of Ramfirth men hunted Grettir hither and thither, so that he was hard put to it to find harbourage anywhere; and when any took him in for a night or two, they never left off praying him to begone. At last the Ramfirthers having hunted him as far as Samstead, heard that he was departed out of their borders, and gave over pursuit. Grettir came on to Reek-knolls, to the house of one named Thorgils, a bountiful man, who already sheltered two foster-brothers, Thor-

geir and Thormod, rough men and fierce, who had been outlawed long ago for high-handed slayings. Thorgils bade Grettir welcome to food and lodging provided he could dwell with the foster-brothers without strife.

In Olaf's isles, some way out in the firth, was a great ox belonging to Thorgils, which he was fain to have home against Yule-time. Grettir went with the two brothers to fetch the ox. They sailed over in a very heavy ten-oared boat, but the wind being fair the weight of the craft mattered little as there was no rowing. When they were come to the isle, the two brothers asked Grettir which he would do, fetch the ox or mind the boat; and since he cared not whether of the twain he did, they left him with the boat, for the surf ran strong about the coast. Howbeit Grettir went into the water, and clipping the boat amidships with his hands held her fast; and though the waves broke over his shoulders and the boat tossed and beat madly about, Grettir would not let go his hold. Thorgeir and Thormod came dragging down the ox, and in a great sweat they were; but by dint of one taking the beast behind, and the other before, they heaved him into the boat. Grettir went aft, and left the brothers to row; but when they rounded Goat-rock there came such a squall that they could make no headway. Thorgeir moreover with the force of his pulling broke the thole-pins. Then he bade Grettir row while he mended them. Grettir took the oars and pulled till both snapped asunder. And while Thormod laughed, and Thorgeir whittled at new thole-pins, he caught up the mast and boom, and cutting notches in the gunwale to pull against, rowed so mightily that the ten-oared craft creaked and bowed beneath his strokes, and presently came to land. Then Grettir asked whether they would haul the boat ashore or take home the ox. But having had enough of the ox, which was strong and big and very unruly, they chose to see after the boat. That ox was the stubbornest brute; he would

go nowhither that a man wanted; and a weary dance he led Grettir. Thorgeir and Thormod stowed the boat and overtook him half way to the farmstead. Grettir was pulling with all his might, and the beast had set his fore-hoofs down in front of him and would not budge. However, the brothers said that they should not meddle with the job, and walked off home. Grettir was getting well-nigh tired, and finding that the brute would neither drag nor drive, he caught him by the hind legs and flung him across his back. Thorgils came out to look for him, and lo there was a man coming up the hill with an ox upon his shoulders! Much marvelled the folk at Grettir's strength.

But Thorgeir grew envious of him, and one day, going down upon the beach with his brother, they met Grettir coming up out of the sea from his bath. And Thorgeir said to him, 'Grettir, is it true that thou hast boasted thou wouldst never flee from before any one man?' He said, 'I have never seen the man from whom I would run. Mayhap there be such men, but thou art not one of them.' Thorgeir had an axe in his hand, and lifted it on high. Grettir had nothing in his hands, but he ran under Thorgeir's arms and flung him a great fall on the shingle. Then Thorgeir cried aloud to his brother for help; and Thormod came quickly and strove to pull Grettir from off him, but could not. A sword was by his side and he was going to draw it, but Thorgils came up and bade them cease brawling or they should no longer abide with him; so the men turned it to a game, and said they wrestled but in sport. And Thorgils had great praise from all folk, in that he could keep such reckless men from doing mischief either to one another or to their neighbours.

Now the time for the Thing being come, Thorod Drapna-stump brought on the suit for the slaying of Thorbiorn Oxmain. Atli's kinsmen made interest with Skapti the Lawman, and got him to defend Grettir.

Skapti said he thought that he could make a good case, and one that should free him from his outlawry. When the judges had heard what was to be said on either side, they came to believe that, Atli and Thorbiorn having been bonders of equal worth, the two slayings should be taken to overset one another. Then said Skapti, 'Why so? Our side is not guilty of a slaying at all. The indictment against Grettir is clearly wrong unless you can show that he was outlawed since the slaying of Atli, because an outlawed man is wholly shut out from law whether for or against him.' Now when it came to be reckoned up it was found that Grettir's outlawry began a week before the death of Atli.

'Wherefore,' said Skapti, 'the suit is brought against a man who was at that time shut out by law from prosecuting the case, and for that cause the suit must fall through. Beside which it is still open for him who is nearest of kin to take up the blood-suit for Atli's slaying. For an outlawed man is as one dead, and can neither take it up nor avenge it.'

Then said Thorod Drapna-stump, 'This is all very well, but who is going to answer to me for the slaying of my brother Thorbiorn Oxmain?'

'That is your business,' said Skapti; 'see you to that.' Thereby the suit against Grettir failed.

Next, Skapti got the nearest of kin to Atli to set up a suit against Thorod Drapna-stump for Atli's slaying, and in the end Thorod was doomed to pay two hundred pieces of silver. 'Now,' said Skapti, 'if you take the outlawry off Grettir we will give up the money-fine; and if you do not, you will find it an ill thing to keep such a man as he at enmity with all folk.' Thorod grumbled not a little at this, but for his part would have taken the offer. Howbeit, since Grettir had been outlawed at the suit of Thorir of Garth, they had first to learn what he had to say about setting him free.

Thorir, when he heard what was wanted, waxed exceeding wroth, and said, 'Never with my will shall he be freed, and I will put more money on his head than any man yet put upon an outlaw.' And with that he came to Thorod Drapna-stump, and prevailed on him to pay down the money for Atli's slaying, and make no bargain with Grettir. Thorod was loth enough, but he counted out the two hundred pieces of silver, and paid them over to Atli's kinsmen. Then, since he had lost his money for naught, and gotten no atonement for his brother, he joined with Thorir of Garth, and they each set a price of three marks of silver upon Grettir's head. Nevertheless, when the folk rode home from the Thing, they were nowise pleased to have Grettir still abiding in outlawry, for they knew full well that many a man would have to suffer for it.

After this Grettir fared away into the dales and preyed fearlessly upon the goods of all the petty bonders in Icefirth: he carried off their horses and cattle, their victuals and clothes and weapons; yet none durst withstand him by force. Howbeit the farmers took counsel together, and set on spies to watch for Grettir, and seek out where he hid himself at night. They found that he lurked in a wood on Waterfirth dale; and thither the farmers gathered together, thirty men in all, and came upon Grettir as he lay asleep. Nevertheless they had great dread of him as he lay there, and considered for some time how they should take him. Then they settled that ten men should leap on him at once and hold him down whilst the others bound his legs. This they did, and cast themselves upon him altogether; but Grettir struggled mightily and gat upon his knees, and sent one stunned and sprawling here, and another there. But the men were so many that at last they had him down and set the bonds upon him. Then the farmers fell to talking what they should do with Grettir now they had got him, and each man was for wanting his neighbour to take Grettir home and keep him

inward through the winter; but there was found none willing, for they said, 'Whosoever has him will have to stop farming, and set all his house-carles a watching him.' They thought, 'What are we to do with him? It is so long before the Thing is held.' At last, after they had turned the matter over, and saw that they durst neither keep him nor let him go, they determined to hang him; and with one accord they fell to work and got a rope over a trusty bough of a tree, and so made a gallows.

Now who should come riding by but goodwife Thorbiorg and her servants. She was wife to Vermund, the chief farmer about those parts. Vermund was away from home, and at such times the goodwife ruled the neighbourhood; for she was a wise woman and of sturdy will. Thorbiorg espying Grettir in bonds said, 'Who is yon big-necked man, and wherefore have you bound him?' They told her, and she said, 'Great ill-luck it is for a man like that to be taken and bound by a pack of milk-sops such as ye. And what will ye do with him?' They answered, 'Hang him; for what else can we do?'

'In sooth you will not,' said the good dame; 'doubtless he is guilty enough, but he is a famous man and of good kindred, albeit his ill-luck is passing strange. Grettir, what wilt thou do for thy life if I give it thee? Wilt thou take oath to plunder no more in Icefirth, and to seek no revenge on them which bound thee?' He said that he would, and thereupon she made the Icefirthers cut the bonds. Moreover Thorbiorg bade Grettir ride away with her, and she gave him shelter in the farmstead till Vermund came home. Vermund was not well pleased with his wife for delivering Grettir from the Icefirth carles, and he asked wherefore she had done so. 'Goodman,' she said, 'the folk will deem thee a greater man than ever in that thou hadst a wife with mettle enough to do this thing.' Then Vermund spake to Grettir, saying, 'Thine is a troublesome life, and I have some pity for thee; yet

I care not to harbour thee longer, to get the ill-will of my neighbours. Wherefore, seek out thy kinsmen, if perchance they be minded to take thee in.'

Then Grettir journeyed away and sought lodging here and there; but one thing and another befell that scarce any would give him shelter; and he was forced to take goods and victuals from such men as he waylaid, in order to get food. And this he did for many winters. But he grew very tired of his lonely life, and by and by he sought out Skapti the Lawman, and prayed him to take him in. Skapti said, 'Ill things are told of thee, Grettir. Folk say thou layest hands on other men's goods; and it befitteth not a man of thy kin to rob and plunder like other woodfolk. I cannot harbour thee; for how shall a lawman break the laws by sheltering outlawed men? But take my counsel: give up pillaging, and seek out some place where thou mayest live by thy hands. But see thou dwell alone, and put no trust in any man, for there are few that would not betray thee for thy head-money.'

Grettir thanked him for this wholesome counsel, and soon after fared off to Ernewater heath among the mountains. There he made himself an earth-house over against Fishwater lake, and dwelt therein. He made also nets and a boat, and caught fish for his food, being fain to do anything rather than rob.

But the mountains were drear and lonely. He had none to speak to; there was no sound but the wind whistling through the heath and the waters lapping in the lake. Very terrible he found it to be alone; for in the dark Glam's eyes shone out and fastened on him, dreadful as he had seen them in the moonlight. So fearsome waxed Grettir that he could not bear his life; and he longed for company of his kind.

Now there was an outlaw, named Grim, a ruffianly fellow, with whom the Northlanders made a bargain that he should seek out Grettir and slay him, for which deed

he should be rewarded both with freedom and a price in money. He came to Grettir' in his earth-house, and sought for shelter.

Grettir was so glad to see a man again that he took him in and welcomed him right heartily. Grim dwelt there all the winter, and all that time he sought opportunity to fall on Grettir unawares; but Grettir always had his weapons by him night and day. One time Grim had been out all night fishing, and very early in the morning he came home and found Grettir lying in bed with the short sword over the bed's head. And that he might know for certain whether Grettir were asleep, Grim trampled hither and thither about the floor, making a great noise with his feet; yet Grettir stirred not nor opened his eyes. Then Grim crept softly up to the head of the bed, and stealthily drew out the short sword from its sheath. He lifted it aloft, but in that moment Grettir sprang up and wrested it from out his fist, flung the man headlong on his back, and smote him to the heart.

After this, Thorir of Garth, yet burning for vengeance for his sons, set on another outlaw called Redbeard to go and slay Grettir. For that cause came Redbeard to Grettir's hut, saying, 'I pray thee give me harbourage through the winter. Thou art right enough to mistrust outlaws, and an ill name have I gotten for slayings and other misdeeds, but I am not the one to betray a friend. Grettir misdoubted the man for all his fair words, but his loneliness was grown so irksome that he was fain to let him in. Nevertheless he held himself very warily towards Redbeard. So time sped on, and two winters slipped away, yet Redbeard never got a chance against his life. And Redbeard worked so hard, and was so handy about boat-craft and fishing, that Grettir took a liking to him. However, one night a great storm arose, and Redbeard got up in the middle of the night, saying that he would go and see after the boat. When he came down to the beach

Redbeard took the nets and flung them into the water, and then stove in the boat; and having cast the pieces about the shore, came presently back to Grettir, shouting, 'The storm has broken the boat to pieces, and the nets are all afloat. Come down and let us see what is to be done.' Grettir rose up, and taking his short sword with him came down to the waterside. He saw the nets adrift, and bade Redbeard slip off his clothes and swim out to them. Redbeard said, 'I am not skilled in swimming, but all men say that thou art; wherefore do thou go after them.' Grettir said, 'So be it then. Only betray me not, for I trust in thee.' Redbeard answered, 'Deem not so ill of me. Lo these two years have we dwelt together, and by this time thou shouldst know I am well-minded toward thee.' Then Grettir stripped off his clothes and his weapons and laid them on the beach. He swam off to the nets, gathered them in his hands, and came in shore at a little jutting neck of land. But as he set foot upon the bank Redbeard ran upon him with the short sword and smote at him. Grettir fell backwards into the water and sank like a stone. Redbeard stood waiting in case he rose to smite him again, and keep him off from the shore. But Grettir dived and felt his way along the bank, under water, till he got round the other side of the neck of land. Then he rose softly and came behind Redbeard, who was peering down into the water on the other bank. Grettir caught him suddenly by the middle and flung him backwards over his head. The short sword flew out of Redbeard's hand in the fall; Grettir took it up and smote the head from off his body.

From that time Grettir would take in no more outlaws to abide with him. Yet his loneliness oppressed him very sore.

Now Thorir of Garth heard of the slaying of Redbeard, and being determined to rid the land of Grettir, he gathered together in all about eighty men and went forth

to hunt him down. But there came a message to Grettir from one of his kindred of what was brewing; so being ware of it, he went no more home to his hut but betook himself to the mountains, and lurked about a certain pass where a mighty rock had gaped open and made a narrow cleft, walled high on either hand. There Thorir and his folk found Grettir, and thinking that he had now caught the great outlaw in a trap, Thorir parted his men into two companies, whereof he set on one to enter the pass and fight Grettir face to face, while the other should go round the mountain and come in at the far end of the pass and take him in the rear. The pass was scarce wide enough for two men to walk abreast, and Grettir had little fear of holding it against them which came in front. Man after man that stood forth to meet him got his death-wound from the short sword. Grettir gave no ground and fought at his ease; for no matter how fiercely they assailed him they could only come on one, or at most two, at a time; and if they came two, they hustled one another and could make no weapon-play. But he knew that the rest were gone round to get in at the back of him, and continually looked about, thinking that when they came it would fare hardly with him. Yet they came not. And Grettir marvelled greatly. However, when many of the men which faced him had been slain, and many more wounded, Thorir saw that they could do nothing and so drew off his men. What troubled Thorir most was, that they which went in at the pass behind Grettir fared no better than they which assailed him in front. So from this deeming it useless to fight further with Grettir upon the mountains, he and his people rode off. They left eighteen dead men over that encounter and took away many that were sorely wounded. And when Thorir got home again he was greatly jeered at; for folk deemed it a shameful journey to leave Grettir whole and lose so many men.

After Thorir's folk were gone, Grettir, yet marvelling

about the fight, walked down the pass, and there he saw a huge strong man, sore wounded, leaning against the road-side. 'Who art thou?' he said. The big man answered, 'I am Hallmund. I dwell up here in a cave. I got an inkling of the fight, and had no mind to see a brave man slaughtered like a sheep. I kept the pass this end for thee, and thou canst count the dead.' Grettir did so and found Hallmund had slain twelve. Then said Grettir, 'Thou hast shown great manliness towards me; and so long as I live I will never forget it.' Hallmund answered, 'It is little enough to help a man in time of need. But come and abide with me, for it is lonely for thee in thy hut upon the heath.'

Glad words they were to Grettir. He went home with Hallmund, and they twain made friends together, and Hallmund's wife tended the wounds of both of them.

Now that Grettir had company he was greatly cheered in mind and temper. He abode with Hallmund through the summer and well-nigh forgat his fearsomeness of the dark. Then his old love of wandering came strong upon him, and he must needs fare away to the dwellings of men; moreover he longed to see his kindred again.

First he journeyed to Burgfirth, and thence to Broad-firth Dales, where he sought out a kinsman of his named Thorstein Kuggson, and asked of him in what part of the country he might with safety abide. Thor-stein Kuggson said, 'Thine enemies are now grown so many that scarce any man may harbour thee. Thou art not safe here; but fare away south to the marshes; it is likely thou mayest find hiding there.'

So Grettir came south and dwelt in Fairwood-fell the winter through. Many lost goods at his hands, but could get no redress, for Grettir had housed himself in a strong place and was ever a good friend to those in need.

There was a seafaring man who came down to Whiteriver called Gisli; an arrant dandy, who prided himself beyond

measure in his smart new clothes and polished weapons, and was withal somewhat given to boasting. He spake to the folk, saying, 'How cometh it to pass that you do not rid yourselves of an outlaw that doth so much mischief?' They said, 'Thou knowest little of the might that is in Grettir. Many have desired to win his head-money; for, beside the price put on him beforetime, Thorir of Garth last summer added another three marks of silver, making nine in all; nevertheless most men deem the money will have to be earned full dear.' Gisli answered, 'Like enough he may scare such folk as you; but I would have you to know that I have fought in battle along with the great King Cnut and am no common sort of a man. The people in that battle said they never saw the like of my fighting. They were wonderstruck. I do not brag, my friends; I only say what others say of me. But set your minds at rest. If this Grettir comes across my path I will terrify him.' He smoothed his beard, settled his fine clothes in order, and strode away.

Grettir was stopping with Biorn, the Hitdale champion, a bluff hardy fellow who would harbour outlaws in spite of any man. And Biorn said to him, 'Try and hap upon this fop. I would not slay him, but only have some sport with him.' Grettir laughed but answered nothing.

In the autumn Grettir made a sheep-fold for himself upon the mountains, wherein to drive the sheep he stole from the bonders. One day he had taken four wethers from a flock and was driving them up the hill-side, when six bonders beset him and sought to get their sheep away; but Grettir caught up two of the men and hurled them down the hill, whereon the rest held off a space; nevertheless when they called, the sheep were fain to follow them. And Grettir waxing very angry at the trouble the sheep gave him to drive, laid hold of them, locked them together by the horns, and flung them two

by two over each shoulder. So he gat home with them to his lair.

Now the bonders having put Gisli in mind that near a year had passed and he had as yet done nothing against the outlaw, Gisli arrayed himself in the finest coloured clothes which he had and came riding with two of his shipmates to the hills where Grettir lurked. Grettir espied them riding, and coming down the hill-side he took hold of the bridle of Gisli's horse and laid hands upon the saddle-bag. Gisli said, 'Robber, knowest thou with whom thou hast to do?' 'Nay,' said Grettir, 'and I care very little, for never was I a respecter of persons; but I shall have this saddle-bag.' Then the three men leaped off their horses, and Gisli cried stoutly to his fellows, 'On to him, good comrades! Be not afraid of this uncouth boor, for I am with you!' Howbeit he sneaked behind their backs and feigned a little play with his dainty sword from time to time. As for Grettir, he mounted to a piece of rock, and swinging round the short sword, quickly laid Gisli's two companions dead; but Gisli never ventured within sweep of the blade. Then he leapt down to have ado with the dandy. But Gisli flung down his weapons and ran for very life; and as he ran he threw off his finery, garment after garment. Grettir followed, somewhat at his ease, meaning to give him time to put off his clothes. So Gisli ran and Grettir after him, till they came to Haf-firth-river, and by that time Gisli had nothing on but his shirt and breech; and the river was bitter cold and full of ice-drift, and being swollen with winter rains was too deep to ford. Gisli was in a sweat for fear, and trembled from head to foot. Grettir caught him by the shoulders and flung him on the ground. 'Now,' said he, 'art thou that Gisli that was so fain to meet Grettir Asmundson?' He answered, 'In sooth I am, but now more fain would I be rid of him. Keep all thou hast and let me go.' Grettir said, 'Aye,

aye; but first I must teach thee a lesson thou shalt not quickly forget.' Therewith he pulled off Gisli's shirt, and having uprooted a prickly bush which grew hard by, he laid it about the dandy's back and flogged him through and through, while Gisli cried and blubbered for mercy. As soon as Grettir let him go, he leapt headlong into the river and swam to the other bank, and so gat home. A whole week Gisli lay in bed with his body swollen, a fearful sight, and when he durst go out he told the folk that a fiend had met him on the mountain. Not a word he spake about Grettir. But people took note that from that time he did not swagger as was his former wont.

After Grettir had been two winters at Fairwood-fell, he went off to Hitriver and joined himself with two other men; and many sheep and beasts they stole. They three did a great fight there with twenty bonders which caught them driving away cattle. They got the cattle and slew eight bonders, but the affray was so noised abroad that Grettir came back to Fairwood, where he abode another winter. Then he went on to Hallmund and abode the next winter with him in his cave. But after Grettir journeyed away, Hallmund, who was ever good to wanderers, took in an outlaw named Grim who was a wondrous lucky fisherman. Hallmund misliked the luck of the man, and half in sport and half in spite would come at night and steal away the fish that hung before his door. Grim could not find who the thief was, so he sat up and watched one night in the dark; and when Hallmund came and had lifted the fish upon his back, Grim stole softly up to him and with both hands drave his axe down deep into Hallmund's shoulder and wounded him to death. Some say Grim knew not then that it was Hallmund; but however that might be, Grim had no after-sorrow for the deed, for he afterwards said, 'It served him right; what business had he to steal my fish?'

Now Thorir of Garth again took up the pursuit after

Grettir, and hunted him over hill and dale with a greater company of horsemen than before. So Grettir was forced to move from place to place and keep close hiding as best he might. There was another man with him, and one day on Reekheath, when, thinking themselves safe from any following, they rode more openly abroad, on a sudden Grettir spied Thorir and his troop close upon them. By goodhap there was a mountain dairy a little in from the wayside, and Grettir cried to his fellow, 'Quick, in with the horses;' and in they went and hid themselves there till the pursuers went past. Then Grettir bethought that he would send Thorir on a fool's chase. So he changed clothes with his fellow, and put on the garments all awry, and slouching his hat to look like a boor, came round by a short cut to the place where he should meet Thorir on the way. Thorir, seeing a great lout of a carle by the wayside, said, 'Tell me, hast thou seen aught of a couple of horsemen riding over the heath?' And Grettir, disguising his voice, answered, 'Aye, good sir; but a little ago I mind seeing two villanous-looking rogues ride by; one of them a stout-built man. They branched off the track down there to the left, and I should deem they will not be above a mile away.' Thorir thanked the carle and rode off, he and his men, at full speed down the hill to the left. Grettir laughed and watched them; and presently the whole troop were floundering about in a bog, the horses up to their bellies in mire, and Thorir and his folk cursing the boor which had beguiled them. It took them all day to drag the horses out, and all night to clean themselves from the mire. But Grettir and his comrade sped away to Garth at their swiftest, and never drew rein till they reached Thorir's homestead. They went in and found Thorir's daughter, and Grettir said to her, 'My little gold-haired lass, when father gets out of the mire, wilt thou tell him that Grettir and his comrade have been to Garth to see him?' The little

maid wondered what it meant, and they rode off. But Thorir was right mad when he came home: and no one could help laughing at the way the outlaw had befooled him.

But there were set so many spies upon Grettir that he deemed it best to part company with his fellow. So Grettir sent him away westward with the horses, and betaking himself to the mountains, wandered off northward in disguise.

Now Grettir learnt that there were strange doings in the house of one Stein, a priest who dwelt at Sand-heaps, over against Isledale-river. For two Yule-eves past, the house-carle that had been left at home to guard the house whilst the goodman and his wife went to church, was carried off and seen no more, but blood-tracks were found on the door-lintel next morning. Wherefore Grettir came that Yule-eve to Stein's homestead seeking shelter. The goodman of the house was gone his way to church, and his wife Steinvor was arraying herself to follow after him, both she and her little daughter. Steinvor asked him his name; and Grettir, fearing to make himself known, said his name was Guest. 'Well, Guest,' she said, 'thou art welcome to guesting; but thou knowest doubtless the illhaps which befall in this house on Yule-eve; so take thy meat and drink, and tarry not.' Grettir thanked her but said, 'I am minded to abide here this night, and I will keep the house for thee.' She looked at him, and seeing him to be of great growth and well knit together about neck and shoulders, she said, 'Thou art a brave man;' and Steinvor tarried talking with him till the time drew on for church. Then Grettir accompanied the goodwife and her daughter down to the river which they had to cross. That morning the ice had been sound and good, but it had thawed fast, and now the river roared along, crashing the drift-ice as it went. Steinvor said, 'What shall we do, for there is no

ford here, and there is no time to get round higher up, and neither man nor horse can cross this flood?'

Grettir said, 'Never fear but I shall carry thee over.'

'Nay,' she answered, 'but carry over the little maiden first, for she is the lightest.'

'I have no mind to make two journeys of it,' said Grettir; and with that caught up wife and daughter in his left arm, and waded into the river breast high. The stream ran very swiftly; the ice-floes in great packs came swirling down upon him, but he warded them off with his right hand, and came to the other bank. Then having set Steinvor and her child ashore, he came back to Sandheaps about the time of twilight. And after he had eaten his meat he shut the homefolk in a chamber against the gable end of the hall, made a strong barrier of timber before the chamber-wall, and set a bench in front of it. Thereon he laid himself down in his clothes to guard the hall.

At midnight there was a great noise, and a mighty troll-wife brake in through the door. In one hand she bare an axe, and in the other a trough, and as soon as she espied Grettir she ran in and grappled him. They wrestled about the hall till everything therein was broken. The troll-wife was the stronger of the twain, and dragged Grettir out of the doorway. They brake the door-framings away with their shoulders as they burst through. All that night they struggled betwixt the door-way and the stream, the troll-wife seeking to drag him to the river-bank, and cast him into the gulf, Grettir withstanding her with all his craft; but he had clutched the witch fast about the waist and durst not leave go. At last she got him to the bank; there Grettir gathered up his might and suddenly swung the witch-wife round. It was but for a moment, but he freed one hand, drew forth the short sword and smote off the arm which grappled him. The

witch fell backwards into the stream and was swept away down into the force.

Grettir was waxed so stiff and swollen from the encounter that he scarce could crawl back to the homestead, and when he reached it he long lay sick and weary in bed. Stein the priest, and his wife Steinvor, tended him, and did so much for his welfare that Grettir revealed his name; and after that they harboured him none the less willingly, because of the deliverance which he had wrought.

As soon as he got his strength again, Grettir bade Stein come out with him and bring a rope, for that he was bent upon going down into the force whither the witch-wife was carried, neither would he suffer the priest to gainsay him. A cliff rose fifty fathoms sheer above the water in that place, and down below the whirlpool foamed and roared about the rocks. Grettir bound a great stone to one end of the rope and sank it in the water; the other end he made fast to a peg upon the cliff-top, and having made Stein promise to watch the rope, plunged off the cliff and dived into the force. He swam down through the water, and past it, till he came to some jutting rocks, whereabout the sand was dry, and the river rolled by overhead. A great cave was there, and within, by a blazing wood-fire, sat a huge and dreadful ogre. Seeing Grettir, the ogre caught up a glaive and smote at him. But the glaive had a wooden handle, and Grettir lopped it in twain with the short sword, and before the ogre could reach up for the sword which hung in the cave, that same short sword had hewed him well-nigh to pieces. The priest who watched above the force, seeing the foam stained with blood, and pieces of flesh tossing about in the water, deemed Grettir dead, and fared off home. But Grettir swam up through the force, and brought with him the bones of Stein's two house-carles which he found in the ogre's cave. Much marvelled

the priest when he saw those bones, and he laid them in earth in the churchyard. And folk in that valley were never haunted more.

That winter Grettir found good hiding at Sandheaps, but certain rumours of these exploits being spread abroad, Thorir of Garth was well assured that none but this mighty outlaw could have done such deeds, and so sent men there to take him. For that cause Grettir was minded to go to a little island in Skagafirth called Drangey, which was a good place for defence, inasmuch as it was so rocky that it must needs be scaled by ladders; but so fearsome was he grown of the dark that not even for the saving of his life could he bear to be alone. So he hasted home to Biarg, and there abode for a few nights with his mother and his brother Illugi. There learning how Grim had slain his friend Hallmund, he went forth seeking him; but Grim had gone away two years and more. Thorstein Kuggson, his kinsman, had also fallen in fight, but neither could Grettir light upon his slayer. And while he yet wandered about the Dales seeking to avenge these two slayings, Grettir was met by Thorod the son of Snorri, a man of some prowess, who withstood him up in the fell. Thorod drew his sword and laid on madly. Grettir did but jest at him the while, nor did he draw the short sword, but only warded the blows off with his shield, till presently growing weary of the strife Grettir said, 'Leave this child's play, for thou canst do naught against me.' And when Thorod would not, but set on the more fiercely, Grettir laid by his shield, and taking him in his arms put him down upon the ground, saying, 'I can do with thee as I will; but thy father, the grey old Snorri, is a good and wise man, highly esteemed are his counsels, and I cannot bring sorrow to him by slaying thee. Wherefore arise and go thy way, and another time seek not an enterprise beyond thy strength.' So Thorod rose up, a little abashed, and

parted good friends with Grettir. And when Thorod told his father how he had fared at Grettir's hands, Snorri said, 'Grettir has dealt gently by thee, and if my counsels may avail aught at the Thing to better his lot, I shall give them in his favour.' And ever thereafter the old man spake a good word for the outlaw.

Afterwards Grettir went again to Biarg and spake to his mother, saying, 'So lonely is my life and the darkness is so terrible, I pray thee let me take my brother Illugi for a companion. Then I can hie me off to Drangey and fear no man.' And his mother Asdis was very heavy at heart, and said, 'He is my youngest-born, the last of all my boys, and I had hoped to keep one of all my sons about me while I live.' But Illugi said, 'Mother, Grettir's lot is very hard. I trow not if he may find my help of great avail; but of this one thing he may be sure, I will never run from him while he is alive; and perchance he may find solace in my fellowship. Let me go, I pray thee.' Then spake Grettir, 'Thou gladdenest my heart, dear brother; and if my mother will spare thee I am fain that thou shouldst go.'

Asdis wept and said, 'Take him, Grettir. Needs be thou shouldst have comfort of some in thy loneliness. But O my sons, I know that I shall never look upon your faces more.' 'Weep not, mother, even if so it be,' said Grettir, 'for whatever befall, folk shall say that thou hast borne braver children than any woman.' Then Asdis busied herself about their departure, and gathered together much of her goods and money, more than they could take, and furnished them for the journey. Grettir said, 'Farewell, mother; live on, hale and hearty,' and therewith they parted. Glad was Illugi at going with his brother. So they set out together, but all that autumn they tarried about the country-side and saw their kindred by stealth.

When winter was come they drew nigh Skagafirth; and

there met them at Dinby a gaunt lazy fellow, who thrust himself into their company. He was a merry tom-fool whom men had nicknamed Noise, big and idle and empty-headed, and Grettir had great sport with him; and because of the diversion which he made Grettir forbade him not to go with them. So they all came on to Reekstead, which is by the firth side; and Grettir prayed of the bonder there to put him across to the island. He would not at first, but when Grettir gave him the purse he had gotten from his mother, and the bonder had seen how full it was, he called out his house-carles and rowed them over the same night.

VI. THE LADDERS UPON DRANGEY.

Now Drangey Island lies somewhat within the firth mouth; and on the shore on either side, scarce a sea-mile away, were farmsteads owned by bonders of more or less account. All these bonders had shares in the island according to the bigness of their holdings on the mainland. Thorbiorn Angle and Hialti, the sons of Thord, owned the most of Drangey, because their farms were biggest, but nigh a score in all had some share therein. They kept rams and ewes there to fat for slaughter, because the herbage was good. The island all round about was cliff, which rose up sheer from out of the sea, so that none might come upon the pasture land atop save when the ladders were let down; and if the topmost ladder were drawn up, no man could scale the rock-side. In summer the cliffs are full of sea-fowl, and the winter Grettir came to Drangey there were eighty sheep upon the island. So Grettir drew up the ladders and set himself down in peace, for he had now both food and company, and was in a place whence none might oust him.

At midwinter the bonders rowed over to Drangey to fetch their fat sheep. Greatly they marvelled when they drew nigh at seeing men upon the island, and deeming them shipwrecked mariners they hailed Grettir, and called to him to let down the ladders. 'Nay,' shouted he, 'we have men enough upon the island; but if ye are bent on coming, come up as best ye may.' The bonders were greatly chopfallen at this, and besought him, saying, 'Only let us come up and fetch our sheep and thou shalt come ashore with us, and we will freely forgive thee for all thou hast slaughtered.' Grettir said, 'I deem it better that each should keep what he has got. That which I once lay hands on I seldom let go. So waste no more words.'

Fair speeches they made after that, and proffers of money, but Grettir only laughed at them and went his way. So the bonders turned their barge about and rowed back to land, and with woeful countenances came and told their neighbours what a wolf had got into their sheep-fold. They laid their heads together and talked the matter speech-bare, but winter passed and they could not hit on any plan to get Grettir out of the island.

That spring much people flocked to the Thing which was held at Heron-ness; and it being no further from Drangey than up the fork of the firth, Grettir set his mind to go thither, for he always grew weary of abiding long in one place. So having charged Noise and Illugi to stay upon the island and see after the ladders, he swam off at night to the mainland. Disguised in a cloak and hood, Grettir came along byways, and reached Heron-ness. There he found a host of folk assembled from all the country-side, holding sports and merrymaking whilst the suits in the court went on. Booths were spread all about, and there was much wrestling-play. The two sons of Thord, Thorbiorn Angle and Hialti, were the strongest at that game; and these laid hold on whatsoever man they

chose and dragged him willy nilly into the ring to fare at wrestling as he might.

Thorbiorn Angle, beholding a stout-built man sit upon a bench with a hood slouched over his face, went and laid hold of him and pulled his hardest. But the man sat still and budged never a whit. Thorbiorn said, 'Thou art the first man I have found withstand me this day, and I reckon myself somewhat strong of hand. Who art thou?' The man said his name was Guest. 'And a welcome guest thou shalt be,' said Thorbiorn, 'if thou wilt but show us a little wrestling-play for our merriment, for methinks thou hast the knack.' Many more came up and likewise prayed him to wrestle with some one. 'Nay,' answered Guest, 'time was when it was a sport of mine, but I have left wrestling.' But when they prayed him yet more and more, Guest said, 'I am greatly loth to wrestle, being a stranger here; but if I must needs be dragged about for your pastime, you must do so much for me as to make a covenant to hold me scatheless until I come back to my home.' To this they were all right willing, and they gathered about whilst one proclaimed that peace should be established betwixt all standing there and the new comer called Guest; that he should be free to depart when the games were done, despite aught that might befall; and that they would hold him safe until he was come back to his homestead wheresoever that should be; so witness God and all good men; whereto they laid their hands together.

Then Guest stood up in the midst and flung off his cloak and hood and his outer garments, and lo Grettir Asmundson stood before them! They gazed at him, and then at one another, and were exceeding vexed, as men which had befooled themselves. They began to break up in twos and threes and to upbraid one another. And Grettir said, 'Keep me not here unclad, but straightway determine whether or no ye will hold to the peace which

ye have made; for I trow it is more to your profit than to mine.' Nevertheless they were long at debate about the matter; but at last Hialti spake up, saying, 'We have been beguiled; yet since we have plighted our word, we will hold to it, lest we be accounted shameful in men's eyes.' And thereto the folk became of one accord, and thought his words brave and rightwise; but Thorbiorn Angle moved away and mumbled, but said naught.

Thereupon the men went to the playing-ground. Grettir stood up stiffly at one end, and first Hialti took a long run and drave forward with all his might to overthrow him; but Grettir abode the shock and moved no more than a wall. Grettir put forth one hand over Hialti's back, caught him by the breech and sent him whirling over his head. Then it was settled that both brothers should go against Grettir at once. And so they did. But though either of the Thords by himself had the strength of two strong men, the twain could not fling him. Grettir had always one of the brothers down under him; and he wrestled with the pair till they gave in from weariness, and their bodies were black and blue with the gripe of his strong fingers. And men that saw, though they bare no goodwill towards the outlaw, could not help glorying in Grettir's exceeding manliness. So they let him depart, and Grettir held his way in peace and got safe back to Drangey.

But the poorer bonders fretted continually because they could not get over to the island, and one by one they came and offered to sell their shares to such as were better off. Hialti would not buy, but his brother Thorbiorn Angle dallied with them and made at one time as though he would buy, then said them nay, then put them off from month to month, and so at last bought their holdings for a mere trifle. And after that Thorbiorn drave a bargain with Hialti his brother and

bought his share; so that by the summer he had gotten the greater part of the island at a very little price. And he was well minded to get possession thereof.

That same summer Thorbiorn Angle manned a barge and came over to Drangey, and having brought the boat to an anchorage, he talked with Grettir, who stood with his fellows high up on the cliff's edge, and sought to coax him to give up the island And when Grettir did but mock at him, Thorbiorn spake, saying, 'Come now, Grettir; what wilt thou take in money-price to depart out of Drangey?' So Grettir said, 'Wherefore shouldst thou busy thyself so greatly about a matter which concerneth a score of other folk?' Thorbiorn answered, 'Sooth to say I have bought the shares of many of the bonders which had holdings herein, and the most part of it belongs to me.' 'Then spare thy pains,' said Grettir; 'for, if the holding of the island now lieth betwixt me and thee, we are not like to smother each other with our friendship. So go thy way.' 'Well,' said Thorbiorn, 'every dog has his day, and when thine is done it will be ill for thee.' 'That is my look-out,' said Grettir, 'and I will risk it.' So Thorbiorn went home.

By the time they had been two years on Drangey, Grettir and his comrades had killed all the sheep in the island save an old pied ram, which they called Speckle-sides. And he grew so tame that they had no heart to slay him. He was very big, and frolicsome withal; whithersoever they went he followed like a dog, and each night he would come and rub his great horns against the door of their hut before lying down to sleep. But they had no lack of food, because of the sea-fowl and their eggs. Howbeit firing was very scarce, and the two brothers set Noise to watch continually for drift-wood from the sea, and they likewise made him tend the fire, charging him straitly to be thrifty of their stock of wood. But Noise

was an idle fellow and loathed his work, and for that cause ofttimes got a shaking from Grettir or Illugi. He never got wood enough, and some days the fire was very low.

One night Noise let the fire out, and they were sore vexed, having no means of kindling it again. Grettir beat the thrall, and becalled him many ill-names. Then having stripped to his breeches, and bound his cloak into a bundle to take with him, Grettir leapt into the sea at eventide and swam off to the mainland to fetch fire. It was dark when he got ashore, and he went and entered into the homestead at Reeks where that bonder dwelt which at the first had taken him over to Drangey. All the folk were asleep; and he groped his way about till he came to an empty chamber where was a bed, and the embers of a fire glowed yet upon the hearth. So Grettir lay down upon the bed, and what with his weariness and the warmth of the chamber, he fell into a sound sleep; daylight came, and he still slept on.

In the morning the bonder's daughter and her handmaid rose up to do their house-work, and coming into the chamber they espied a man lying bare upon the bed, and the bed-clothes kicked off him on to the floor. They whispered together, and the handmaid said: 'As I may thrive, it is Grettir Asmundson! But who would have deemed a man so big about the neck and shoulders would be so small of growth below?' 'Hold thy prating tongue,' said the bonder's daughter, 'or he will wake.' But the handmaid answered, 'Good sister, I cannot help it. Only look! I never saw so strange a thing.' And with that she ran up on tip-toe to take a peep at Grettir. But as soon as she came nigh, Grettir, who only feigned to sleep, caught her up in his arms, and drew her to him; and she struggled with him and he with her; and the bonder's daughter ran out of the room and screamed; but none the more would Grettir let the handmaiden go

till he had kissed her soundly. And at last she got away, laughing and blushing, but not so greatly ill-pleased.

Presently Grettir arose and went to the goodman of the house. And when the bonder knew of the strait he was in for fire, and how he had swum a sea-mile after it, he not only gave him fire, but got out a boat and put him ashore again upon the island.

That summer there came to Thorbiorn Angle a young man named Hæring, who was very agile of foot and a great climber; and Thorbiorn promised that it should prove greatly to his profit if he would scale the cliffs on Drangey. They laid their plan on this wise; they were to row out to Drangey in a boat, and Thorbiorn was to land Hæring secretly on the rocks at one part of the island, and then go round to the side where the ladders were, and hold Grettir in speech whilst Hæring climbed the cliffs and came up at the back of the outlaw and smote him down. So they put off to the island, and Thorbiorn having landed Hæring before it was light, straightway set him a-climbing. Then Thorbiorn rowed round to the other side about daybreak, as though he were just come from the mainland, and he began to talk earnestly with Grettir and Illugi, making them large promises if they would only give up the island. But it so befell that as they talked, Illugi chancing to turn his head, beheld a man running towards them axe in hand. And he said to Grettir, 'There is some guile at work, for lo, a man runneth hither with his axe aloft.' 'Go thou and deal with him,' said Grettir; 'I will abide here and watch the ladders.' But Hæring, seeing they had knowledge of him, took to his heels and ran. Illugi sped away after him, and they raced across the island till Hæring came more suddenly than he reckoned upon the brink of the cliff, and not being able to stay himself, leapt down headlong, and was shattered to pieces upon the rocks below; and the place is called Hæring's Leap to

this day. When Illugi came back, Grettir asked how it had fared with his enemy, and Illugi answered, 'He would not stop to let me ask how it had fared with him, but must needs go and break his neck over the cliff-side.' Thorbiorn Angle hearing that put off from the island, saying to his folk, 'Lo these two journeys which I have made to Drangey have come to naught, but the third time I go it shall not be in vain.'

Now in the nineteenth year of Grettir's outlawry died Skapti the Lawman: and that was exceedingly ill-timed for Grettir, inasmuch as Skapti had promised to bring about his acquittal so soon as the years of his banishment should be fulfilled. And the next spring died Snorri also, the man of all others who would have stood his friend. And when the summer came on, and the Thing was held, there was a talk about Grettir's outlawry, for his kindred came and urged that the time was come when he should be set free. But there were many which held blood-suits against Grettir, and these said that since he had done so many slayings whilst he was an outlaw, his time ought to be lengthened. Now Stein, the new Lawman in the room of Skapti, was a wise and just-dealing man; he gave forth the law that no man could bo kept in outlawry more than twenty winters in all, no matter what ill-deeds he had done meanwhile. And the old records being searched, it was found that this was indeed the twentieth summer since Grettir was outlawed, but that his time would not be fully accomplished in whole years until winter. Howbeit as the Things were held in summer, Grettir must needs serve either half a year more or less, inasmuch as it was needful to declare him free either at that Thing, when he would have fulfilled but nineteen years and a half, or at the one next year when he would have served twenty years and a half. But Thorir of Garth rose up and spake very fiercely against the outlaw. Thorir was grown old and grey;

through Grettir's mishap he was a childless man; and all these years had failed to slake his thirst for vengeance. He demanded that Grettir should work out his punishment to the uttermost; and since the law said twenty winters, Stein the Lawman adjudged that Grettir's freedom should be delayed till next summer.

Now many folk were in great fear because the time drew nigh that Grettir should be free, and they stirred up Thorbiorn Angle to give himself to any manner of craft, so he might compass Grettir's destruction, rather than have him turned loose on them again. And at last Thorbiorn bethought him of his foster-mother, Thurid, who was very old and withered, and could scarce crawl about, but had much cunning in forbidden lore. And when he had told her his desire, the old witch said: 'I will help thee in the matter if thou wilt let me have my will herein; but seek not to know wherefore I do this or that.' This Thorbiorn promised her, and she said: 'Take me out with thee in a boat to Drangey, that I may look on Grettir and know where his luck will fail him.' So Thorbiorn made ready a ten-oared boat and came over to Drangey with the witch-wife lying in the stern, muffled up in wrappings. And Thorbiorn hailed Grettir, and began to talk to him as aforetime concerning giving up the island. He offered him much money, and also to hold him scatheless for all past deeds if he would go away. But Grettir said: 'Why wilt thou pester me these many times? Do as thou wilt, I shall abide here.' Thorbiorn answered, 'I might have known what an untoward thief I had to deal with, and spared my journey. But it will be a long day that brings me hither again.' 'I shall not pine for thy company,' said Grettir, 'nor yet if thou breakest thy neck like the last man that came here at thy bidding.'

Then the witch-wife moved in her wrappings and stood up, tottering and shaking. She looked upon Grettir and

said: 'Many good things have been offered thee, and thou despisest them; behold now, evil things I cast upon thee. From this time forth, good-heed, good-health, good-hap, shall fail thee.' And laying this weird on Grettir, she spread forth her trembling hands, and mumbled at him.

Grettir shuddered exceedingly when he heard her, and he said to Illugi, 'Curse this foul hag. She has set my blood a-cold. I fear me lest she work us evil by her cunning.' With that he caught up a great stone, and flung it wildly down into the boat: it smote the thigh of the witch and brake it. Thorbiorn's men bent to their oars and rowed away.

'I would thou hadst not done that,' said Illugi.

'So would I,' answered Grettir, 'but I fear her so. Would I had done more or less; and either killed her outright or never flung at all!'

Thorbiorn's foster-mother lay a month in bed till the thigh-bone was grown together again; and as soon as she could limp about, she came down to the sea-shore and looked here and there for something whereby to wreak her vengeance. A tree-trunk was lying on the beach, as big as a man might carry; and she went to it, and with her knife smoothed a flat space thereon, and cut runes on it. Then she went backwards and forwards about the tree, and cast spells over it. And having got men to thrust it into the water, she spake witch-words to the tree that it should drift out to Drangey.

Now as Grettir and Illugi walked about the island looking for firewood, they perceived a tree-trunk drifted ashore on the westward side; and Illugi said, 'Brother, here is firewood; let us take it home.' But Grettir regarded the log, and misliked it. He said: 'Nay, Illugi, we will not have this tree; it is an evil-looking tree, and there is ill-luck about it. See thou touch it

not.' Grettir kicked it with his foot and thrust it back into the water.

Another day they went, and behold the log was drifted up again close to the ladders. This time Grettir drave it far out to sea, and charged Illugi by no means to take it for firewood if it should ever be borne back again.

It was the spring-time, and Grettir rejoiced more that year than any other to see the days lengthen, and the green spread over Drangey, and the flowers come; for he knew that the end of his outlawry drew nigh. One evening that spring the wind blew up into a gale and the rain poured down. Neither Grettir nor Illugi cared to go abroad; but the fire getting low they sent Noise out to seek for wood. Noise grumbled, saying that he always had to trudge about on hard jobs in ill weather, but he went off to the beach, and the first thing he spied was the witch-wife's tree against the ladders. Not a little glad to have found a log so ready to his hand, he laid it across his shoulders, and bare it up the ladders, and bringing it to Grettir's hut, cast it down before the door. Grettir heard something cast down outside, and taking his axe went out in the twilight to find what it might be. He saw that Noise had brought a goodly tree, and bade him split it up. But Noise was sweating and sulky moreover, for his burden had not been light, and he said, 'Split it thyself, for I have done my part.' Then Grettir losing temper with the thrall, bade him get out of his way, and he took the axe in both hands, and not heeding what log it was, smote mightily into it. But the axe pitched flatwise on the tree-trunk, and glanced off into Grettir's thigh, and smote fast into the bone of it. Then Grettir knew the tree, and cursed it, and the witch-wife, and Noise. He staggered back into the hut, and there Illugi washed his wound and swathed it up.

The wound bled little, for all it was so great; it gave

no pain; and for the first three days the edges of the flesh seemed like to grow together again. But on the third night Grettir tossed in his bed and could in nowise rest, and when Illugi had got a light and loosed the swathings, he saw that all the leg was blue and swollen, and the wound broken open anew and festering. Night after night Grettir lay and tossed and could not close his eyes for the sharpness of his pain; but none the less did his spirit bear up bravely, though sleep came not to assuage his torment. He sang of the mighty deeds which he had wrought through life; and Illugi would not leave his side, but sate by him night and day to comfort him.

But Grettir fretted much about the ladders as he lay. He had no mind to send Illugi from him, and so was fain to leave Noise to see after them. Always at night he would ask the thrall if he had drawn the ladders up; and oftentimes Noise would wax surly and say that with such gales blowing no boats would venture out in the firth, and that he deemed it folly to take such pains each day for naught. But Grettir never ceased warning him, saying that their lots were all cast in together, and ill-hap for one would prove ill-hap for all. Howbeit Noise was wont to do much as he listed; for he was very wise in his own eyes, and wist not that any man could teach him aught. So a fortnight passed, and Grettir's wound swelled each day; the edges turned out and waxed so foul that he was like to die; and all that while the wind blew and the rain came down without ceasing.

VII. THE NOTCH IN THE SHORT SWORD.

As Thorbiorn Angle sate in his house there came limping in at the doorway his old foster-mother, who spake, saying, 'Arise quickly, get men together, and go over to

Drangey, for I see that it shall now prosper with thee.' He answered, 'Nay, mother, no boat can put out with such a storm blowing; let us wait for fair weather.' 'Do as I bid thee,' said the witch.

So Thorbiorn went and gathered eighteen men, and for all the waves were raging so madly, he entered with them into a boat and put off to sea. The witch-wife stood upon the beach and mumbled, waving her hands as one that weaves in the air. And it was so that, in spite of all the storm, there was a space of blue-smooth water always before the boat; and by the time it grew dusk they reached Drangey. Thorbiorn looked up the cliff-side, and behold the ladders were let down! Wondering greatly how this might be, he and his men mounted to the top and came upon the island. Noise was lying there fast asleep and snoring hard. Thorbiorn took him by the ear saying, 'Wake up, thou careless dog! Ill betide him that putteth his life in thy keeping.' Noise well nigh lost his wits when he saw eighteen men before him and knew what his folly had brought about. Straightway he began to bawl aloud if peradventure he might make Grettir hear; but Thorbiorn bade him hold his peace or they would kill him. Then was the thrall in great fear for his life, and being threatened of them all, he told of Grettir's hurt, and how he lay nigh death's door, with Illugi watching him. So they charged Noise to bring them to the hut, and he durst not say nay, but led them thither, crying bitterly as he went. But Thorbiorn despised him beyond measure and said, 'Thou art a cursed knave thus to betray thy master, although he is a man with no good in him,' and being come within sight of the hut, he took the thrall and kicked and cuffed him about till he fell down on the ground and lay there as dead.

Illugi was tending Grettir within the hut, when suddenly there came a mighty smiting at the door.

Illugi deemed it was the ram, and said, 'Brother, Speck-sides is knocking at the door.' 'And wondrous hard,' said Grettir. As he spake the door burst open. Illugi caught up his weapons and sprang into the doorway. So well he guarded it that never a man could pass. They could do naught against him save with spears, and Illugi smote off every spear-head from its shaft. When the men found that there was no getting in through the door, they mounted to the roof and began to tear away the thatch.

Now Grettir was so sick that he could not stand, and his leg was so greatly swollen that he might not lift it; but he kneeled up in bed upon the other knee, and reaching forth a spear, thrust it up betwixt the rafters, and thereby ran one man through and through. Then Thorbiorn Angle called to his men to leave the midst of the roof and come and strip away the thatch from the far end of the ridge-beam, where Grettir might not reach them, telling them they were safe from Illugi because he durst not leave the doorway. This they did, and presently came leaping down into the hut. The first man that sprang upon the bed Grettir cleft asunder in the midst with the short sword, insomuch that the one half of his body fell upon the floor, but the other half tumbled upon Grettir, and somewhat encumbered him. In that moment Thorbiorn Angle thrust him through, a great and grievous wound, betwixt the shoulder-blades. Grettir cried out to his brother, and Illugi came and flung his shield over him and guarded him full well. Long time they fought, and Illugi slew three of Thorbiorn's fellows, and gave the most part of them some wound or other; and all that while he never lifted his shield from warding Grettir. Nevertheless at the last, when they could come at him in no other manner, they bore Illugi down with beams and took and bound him fast. Then they went up to Grettir; but he was fallen forward upon his face

and lay in a swoon; and his leg was a dreadful sight, for it was decayed right up into his body. And one and another went and hewed fiercely at him with their swords. But Grettir moved not, for he was long past speech, and the wounds they gave him scarce bled

And when they all deemed him to be dead, Thorbiorn Angle laid hold on the short sword, but Grettir's fingers at all.

yet griped it so fast that he could in nowise wrest it away. Eight of them came, and pulled and twisted with all their might, but could not loose the sword from his holding. Thorbiorn called for a block of wood and laid Grettir's wrist thereon, and smote off the hand. Then only did the fingers loose themselves from the sword-handle. And after that Thorbiorn took the short sword and hacked not once nor twice with both hands at Grettir's neck before he could smite the head from off his shoulders. But the short sword might not abide that stroke, and a great notch was broken in the midst of the blade where it smote on Grettir's neck-bones.

So died Grettir, the most famous outlaw that ever lived in Iceland. He was but fourteen years of age when he slew Skeggi, and all things worked together for his glory till, being twenty years old, he met with Glam. He was twenty-five when he fell into outlawry, and he lacked but one winter of forty-five years old when he was slain. He abode longer in outlawry than any man; he was more mighty than all his fellows which have lived before or since; and none could overcome him while he was hale.

Then Thorbiorn Angle bethought what he should do with Illugi, and he spake to him, saying, 'I will give thee thy life if thou wilt pledge thyself to seek vengeance on none of us for this day's work.' Illugi said, 'I will not take so base an oath to save my life. Though I am bound both hand and foot, I tell thee, Angle, that if thou durst loose these cords, I will do what I may to

avenge my brother upon thee.' Wherefore Thorbiorn went and took counsel with his fellows, and afterwards came back to Illugi, saying, 'Since thou art thus minded, we have determined to slay thee.' Then said Illugi, 'Do thy worst; my heart is not afraid.' So they took Illugi, bound as he was, to the eastern side of the island, and there hewed him in pieces with their swords; but they could not kill his courage, for Illugi stood and laughed aloud whilst the sword-blades smote into his flesh.

Then Thorbiorn went home; and he took with him Grettir's head and laid it up in salt.

Now when the time of the Thing was come, there was a great gathering of folk; and Thorbiorn Angle came, and set down Grettir's head upon the table before them all, boasting of the great deed he had done, and claimed the head-money. But Thorir of Garth said, 'True it is that I, more than any other man, brought about Grettir's outlawry and set the price upon his head. But though I had better reason than other men to hate him, I count it shame to have taken his life through subtlety and witch-craft; and for that cause I will not pay the price.' Moreover there came many of Grettir's kin, who laid their suits against Thorbiorn Angle for the slaying of Grettir and Illugi, and for dealing in sorcery and forbidden lore, and again for bearing weapons against a sick and helpless man. And it was so, now that Grettir was dead and gone, that the hearts of most folk were turned towards him, and they deemed him to have suffered hardships through his life and to have been ill dealt with in his death. So it befell that very few were on Thorbiorn's side. And Stein the Lawman gave judgment on the suit, and said that the head-money should not be paid for so shameful a deed. Moreover he adjudged that the slaying of Thorbiorn's fellows should be taken to quit for the slaying of Illugi and no more; but for the blood-suit for Grettir, Thorbiorn Angle should be banished out

of Iceland, and never come back while any of Grettir's kindred lived.

Men went out to Drangey and brought away the bodies of Grettir and Illugi, and laid them in the churchyard at Reek-strand. But Grettir's head was taken to Biarg and given to his mother Asdis. She buried it in the church upon the homestead. Thereafter she spake but little; and she was too old to weep. She would sit in the old homestead crooning over the fire all the day. Her folk were very gentle to her, and let no care nor trouble vex her latter days.

But Thorbiorn Angle took ship and went to Norway. He wandered from town to town, and came at length to Tunsberg, where he abode a while, till hearing that Grettir's brother, Thorstein Dromond, dwelt there, he deemed his life scarce safe in that part, and so journeyed away to Micklegarth, and took war-pay from the Varangians. Now Thorstein Dromond knew not of Angle's being in Tunsberg till after he had gone away; but as soon as he was ware thereof, he called to mind the words he had spoken when Grettir made sport of his lean arms. Thorstein thereupon sent out spies to follow after Angle and send word whither he went. And when he had tidings that Angle was in Micklegarth, thither he journeyed after him. But there was much people in that place, making ready to go out to war, and Thorstein could learn nothing of the man he sought. They held a weapon-show, as was the custom before battle, and the Varangians thronged about it. Now Thorstein Dromond had never in his life set eyes on Thorbiorn Angle, neither could he tell by what token he should know him. But each day he went in and out among the crowd at the weapon-show, and watched the men which came to show their weapons.

One day there came a man who showed a short sword notched in the blade. Folk praised the weapon greatly,

but said it was an ill-hap that so good a blade should have had a shard broken out from the midst. Then said the bearer of the short sword, 'With this blade I slew Grettir the Strong, the great Iceland champion, and so hard were his neck-bones that I notched the sword in smiting off his head.' And the people which stood there took the short sword in their hands and passed it about from one to another wondering at the tale. And Thorstein Dromond also was fain to look upon the blade which had done so great a deed. They gave it to him. Straightway he clutched the short sword with both hands, uplifted it, and smote it into Angle's skull down to the jawbone. So Thorbiorn Angle got his bane from the sword of Grettir.

But the people laid hold on Thorstein and carried him away to the Chancellor of the town to answer for the slaying. Thorstein told what good cause he had against Angle, and how far he had travelled to avenge his brother's death; but the rulers of the city said that his tale might be true or not, he had no witnesses, and they had one law only for whosoever slew a man, and this was that he must die. So they thrust him into a dungeon to abide his doom.

VIII. THE HAPPY GOOD LUCK OF THORSTEIN.

THORSTEIN was a man of the greatest good luck in all things which he did. There was a wretched prisoner already in the dungeon, who, being cast for death did nothing but weep and bewail himself. 'Never lose heart, comrade,' said Thorstein, 'for if our days be few, the more need is there that we use up all our merriment before we die.' Therewith he began trolling out a merry ditty, and all that night made the dungeon walls ring with his cheer-

ful songs. Moreover Thorstein had a goodly voice and was well skilled to use it.

And it fell out that a certain great lady of the land, called the Lady Spes, was passing by and heard him singing; and she thought within herself, 'Great pity it were that so merry a singer should die. And it is certain that he is a brave fellow to sing with death hanging over his head.' So she called to him down in the dungeon and said, 'Wilt thou take thy life from me if I can bring about thy ransom?' He answered, 'Nay, good mistress, I fret not over much about so poor a thing as life; but there is a wretched fellow down here who fears to die. Ransom him, and thou shalt do a kindly deed.' 'Nay,' said the lady, 'since thou art generous as well as brave and merry, I am more than ever determined to save thy life; but I deem thy comrade no great prize.' Thorstein answered, 'Fair lady, of this one thing I am determined; I will share my comrade's fate, whatever it be. Yet now I confess I should be sorry to die; for since my life has been esteemed of thee it is growing precious unto me.' And the Lady Spes thought to herself, 'He is courteous, beside.' So she went straightway to the city rulers and offered a great ransom for the two men doomed to die. The Varangians needed money for their war; they haggled awhile about the price, but took the lady's gold and set the prisoners free.

Now the Lady Spes had wedded for wealth's sake a man far beneath her in kindred: a very rich man, old and covetous, whose name was Sigurd; and they had little fellowship. So as soon as Thorstein came out of gaol she brought him to her own house, and lodged him there unknown to her husband, for their hearts were turned to one another. She gave Thorstein money in abundance, and in sooth she herself began to spend it with a liberal hand. And Sigurd her husband came to her, saying, 'Strange ways are these. My money is

being squandered at a wondrous rate; and as for thee, I scarcely see thy face at all. Strange ways!' he murmured, and shook his head. The Lady Spes tossed hers, and answered: 'If a man wed above him, he must look for things a little strange. My kindred told thee at the first that I should not spare thy goods. Neither have any been wont to say to me "So much and no more shalt thou bestow," nor shall I ever suffer them. Talk not then of thy dross; but if thou hast aught to lay to my shame, say on.' He answered, 'Nay, dear lady, I know not aught for certainty; but at times—I do misdoubt me—whether—lest—some other man—' 'How dare you slander my good name! What cause have you to think —' (she burst out weeping). 'This matter shall come before the law but I will be righted.' 'Nay,' said he, 'I only meant, but I may be wrong—' 'You meant,' she cried, 'to slander a true wife. This comes of wedding a man of low kin!' and flounced out of the room.

But Spes and Thorstein loved always together; and so many friends they made by squandering Sigurd's gold that none cared to say aught against them. And it fell upon a day when the pair were talking merrily together in a loft, that the lady bade Thorstein sing her a ditty. For she said, 'My goodman is sitting over his drink, and never comes this way.' With that she made fast the door and Thorstein began to sing. But he had scarce got through a stave when the husband at the head of all his servants came hammering without. In a moment the lady opened a chest wherein she kept her fairest raiment, locked Thorstein therein and sate upon it. 'Pray come in,' she cried: 'or stay, is the door fastened? I will undo it.' She shot the bolt, saying, 'Haste thee, husband; for surely thy foes are in pursuit, that thou makest such an uproar.' 'Woman,' he said, 'I have found thee out; where is the man that was singing here but now?' She said, 'Thou art surely crazed. I see no

man here. Thou art all too cunning. But a fool is wise if he will hold his tongue.' The old man searched about, but could find nothing. 'Why dost thou not take the man,' said the goodwife, 'if he be here?' Sigurd shook his head; and he said to his servants, 'Did ye not hear a man singing in this place awhile ago?' But his servants would have naught to say against their mistress, so they answered: 'Of a surety we thought we did, but it is plain we are mistaken. None can say certainly as to sound whence it comes. Sounds have strange ways.' So Sigurd gave it up; and after that his dame led him such a life that for a long time he durst not spy on her any more.

Another day it befell, when the Lady Spes was in the cloth-bower with Thorstein, that Sigurd came and rummaged all about, but could find no man; for the goodwife had hidden him underneath the pile of store-cloths; and the cloths were all smoothed out so trimly that none would have deemed them to have been disturbed.

The castle wherein the Lady Spes dwelt was built over the sea, the water flowing underneath it, and round the pillars; and she had a secret way made, with a little trapdoor leading from the floor of her chamber down to the sea, and fitted so cunningly that it seemed but the joints of the boarding. Now one time Sigurd told his wife that he must needs go away on a long journey; but instead of going, he hid himself about the place and watched. When they thought him gone, Thorstein and Spes made merry together and were seldom apart. One day Sigurd came out from his hiding, and after spying about awhile he saw the Lady Spes let a man in at the gateway of the castle. Then he heard the sound of singing in a chamber, and clambering up to the window, lo! he saw a man with her; and they were both laughing as merrily as might be. The goodman stole away softly, and went and called his neighbours, and gathered half

the town together to come and see if what he told them was not true. But the Lady Spes heard the clamour of the crowd, and sent Thorstein down through the trap-door into the sea, bidding him give her a token if he came safe to land. So when one part of the folk came and looked in at the window, there was naught to be seen save a lady sitting all alone, and toying with the rings upon her hands. And the other part of the folk, which went into the castle with Sigurd, found the chamber door ajar, but no man therein. So all that Sigurd gat for his pains was the jeering of the crowd for bringing them on a fool's errand. 'Good people,' said he, 'I certainly beheld a man within this chamber.' The folk believed him not, but said, 'Overmuch wine will make a man see double; the double of a woman is a man, to make a pair; old eyes will have strange ways.' Then was the goodman very wroth, and said to his wife, 'Lo, these three times hast thou outwitted me; but since I am now befooled in sight of all the people, thou shalt go before the bishop, and purge thee by oath in this matter.' She answered, 'Thou hast done very foolishly; nevertheless for my own sake, and to free me from the slander, I deem it meet that I should go.'

When the folk were gone away, the lady watched all night, and toward morning saw a fire burning on the land. Then she knew that Thorstein was come safe to shore; for that was the sign they had agreed on. And while Sigurd was gone next day to lay the accusation against her before the bishop, Thorstein and she were together planning how she should be cleared.

Now the day being come when the Lady Spes should go to make her oath, she attired herself in the richest apparel that she had, and went forth with a great company of noble ladies to the church. The rain had fallen heavily for many days before, and over against the porch was a slough of mire which must needs be crossed

to get to the church. A great multitude of folk was gathered together, and among them were many beggars asking alms of the passers-by. And a certain cripple, a hoary-bearded man, in tattered garments, who went on crutches, perceived how fairly Spes was arrayed, and came to her saying, 'Suffer me, I pray, to bear thee over the mire.' She answered: 'How shalt thou bear a burden that scarce canst bear thyself?' 'Nay, lady,' said he, 'but it may be that thou shalt fare none the worse for making thyself lowly toward the poor.' Then she suffered herself to be lifted on the churl's back, and he hobbled along with her into the slough. But when they were come into the midst of it, the beggar man seemed to get but poor hold for his crutches, for he began to stumble and to stagger from side to side. 'Gather up thy strength,' cried the lady, 'for if thou lettest me fall it shall go hard with thee.' The old man staggered wildly forward, and missing his crutch-hold, swooped off sideways, and scarce had cast the lady upon land, when he fell headlong in the mire. He floundered about and sought to catch the hem of her skirt to save himself. She, with a shudder for fear her sumptuous robe should be polluted, snatched it smartly from him, so his miry hand came down on her bare knee. The Lady Spes sprang up and cursed the churl, and vowed that he should be beaten. He pleaded his great age and misery; and the people seeing how poor and wretched he looked, made intercession for him. So the goodwife took the purse from her side, shook the gold pieces into the beggar's lap, and blaming still his awkwardness, went straightway to the church.

Then when they were come before the bishop, the accusations against her were fully set forth. And the Lady Spes declared herself a good woman, and made oath saying, 'I swear that I am clean as concerning all other men beside my lord, save of that cripple who openly defiled me this

day; and to none other have I given at any time of my husband's gold.' Now this being deemed a full oath, her kindred began to say that it was a shame for false charges thus to be brought against a lady of high estate. And so hard they pushed matters that they prevailed upon the bishop to make out a divorce betwixt her and Sigurd. And inasmuch as Sigurd was held to have forsworn himself and to have done very wickedly in bringing such lying slanders to her charge, he was driven out from the land, as a warning to other husbands who might else be minded to do the like; and all his possessions were adjudged to the Lady Spes to make amends for what she had suffered. All people pitied her and held her to have been greatly ill-used. But soon afterwards it began to be whispered that the cripple which had carried her over the slough was none other than Thorstein, and that some wise man had taught her how to swear an oath that sounded sooth the while it beguiled the bishop. However that may be, it came to pass that, not very long after Spes was divorced from her husband, and had taken to herself all his money, Thorstein came wooing her. And since her kinsmen left her free to do as she desired, Spes wedded with Thorstein and brought him all her riches. Thereafter they dwelt in the goodliest fellowship one with another. All things prospered whereto they set their hands, and their possessions increased continually, for all that they were the most bountiful in their dealings.

But after a time Thorstein being minded to go back to his home and kinsfolk, they sold their lands and their chattels and went away into Norway. There they dwelt many years together in great love and contentment, until old age crept upon them both.

And when Thorstein was threescore and seven years old, yet hale withal, he bethought him to go up to the court of King Harald to do him service; but his wife besought him saying, 'Husband, there is somewhat I fain

would speak, that has often been on my mind of late.' And he said 'Say on.' Then spake she, 'More meet it were to go to another King to whom we have more to pay. For lo, our youth is departed, and our days have been given overmuch to the pleasures of this world. Wherefore I will that we change our ways and seek after those things which shall make our everlasting welfare; to which end let us fare away to Rome-town and get our souls in health.' Thorstein answered, 'In all things I will as thou willest.'

Then Thorstein gathered all his kinsfolk together, and spake to them concerning the journey whereon he was bent. And he divided his goods before them, and gave one half to his kindred. And the portion that remained to him he divided again, and gave half of it for the founding of churches and chantries, and to distribute amongst the poor and needy. When he had so done he bade farewell to them all, and he and his wife fared away to Rome. There they made their shrift, and confessing by what subtile craft they had been joined in wedlock, gave themselves wholly to prayer and penance for the amending of their lives. Thenceforth they made a vow to dwell apart in chastity, to the end that they might more surely count on fellowship together above. So they told out money to build two stone cells; and when the cells were ready they prayed together, and parted at the doors. Thorstein entered into his cell; Spes into hers. The doors were shut; and neither looked upon the other's face again in this world.

GUNNLAUG AND THE FAIR HELGA.

THORSTEIN EGILSON was chief among the Icelanders in Burgfirth, and kept house at Burg. Egil's kin have ever been renowned amongst the Marshmen; Thorstein was, moreover, a man of great estate; and his counsel was highly esteemed at the Thing, for he was well versed in law, wise-minded withal, and temperate of speech.

One summer Thorstein rode off to the coast, as his wont was, to buy wares out of the merchant ships that came from the mainland. He bought such goods as he stood in need of against the winter from the master of a Norse vessel, and getting friendly over their bargain, he and the skipper lodged together some days and went up to the Thing together.

And on a sunny afternoon Thorstein fell dozing in a booth and laboured heavily in his sleep. The skipper watching beside him marked how hard a time he had of it, but would in nowise disturb him till his sleep was out. And when Thorstein woke up wearied from his restless tossing, the skipper asked him, 'Hast thou dreamed aught?' 'I dreamed,' said Thorstein; 'but a dream is naught. I will tell it thee if thou wilt, to pass the time. Methought in my dream that I beheld the roof-ridge of my house at Burg, and a goodly white swan had lighted there. The swan seemed mine, and very fair and

precious it was in my sight. Then came an eagle, black of eye, which swooped down from the mountains and nestling against the swan, cooed lovingly to her; and the swan seemed glad thereof. But presently another eagle came flying from southward and sought to woo the swan. The first eagle ruffled up his plumes and set on him: they fought fiercely together, beak and claw, till both being torn and covered with blood, the eagles fell dead together, and tumbled backwards, one on either side the roof-ridge. The swan sat lonely on the house-roof, drooping and very sad. An idle dream, my friend, betokening perchance that the wind will blow next winter from the quarters whence the eagles flew.'

But the skipper answered, 'Make not so light of dreams; and as for this one which thou hast dreamed, I will foreshow thee what it signifieth. The fair white swan thou sawest on thy roof-ridge is a daughter which thy wife shall bear to thee. The eagles are two men of high kindred that shall love her overmuch, for which cause they will fight together and both lose their lives.'

'An ill dream-reader art thou,' said Thorstein, 'and I deem thou hast read mine in no friendly fashion.' The skipper's words misliked him; and he parted company with the man and came home to Burg.

Now as next summer drew on Thorstein was in some fear lest the skipper's words should be fulfilled. And before he rode off to the Thing he called Jofrid his wife and said to her, 'Now I charge thee straitly concerning thy child when it shall be born; if it be a woman-child thou shalt cast it forth, but if a man-child thou mayest nurture it.' Then Jofrid pleaded with him, saying, 'Surely a wicked thing it were for a man of thine estate to do a deed that is looked on with ill-favour even when wrought by poor folk who have many children and scarce bread enough to feed them.' But he answered,

'Thou knowest my mind; take heed and do as I have bidden thee;' and therewith rode off to the Thing.

Soon after he was gone Jofrid gave birth to a woman-child, fair as eyes ever looked upon, and being in fear of her lord, she sent privily for her shepherd and said, 'I cannot cast forth this little one. Wherefore take and saddle my horse and carry the babe westwards to Herd-holt. My husband's sister Thorgerd dwells there. Pray her to nourish it for me for kindred's sake, and not to tell my lord. Here are three marks of silver for thee. Thorgerd will get thee away across the sea, where Thor-stein shall never know.' The shepherd took the child and wrapped it warm and rode away with it to Thorgerd. She gave it to a woman on her homestead to nourish and bring up; moreover she gave the shepherd an outfit for sea-faring and got him out of the land.

When Thorstein came home Jofrid told him that the child had been cast forth as he had commanded, and also that their shepherd had fled and stolen her horse. Thor-stein was well pleased, thinking that a horse more or less, or a runaway herdsman, was naught to make ado about. So for six years he wist not that the child was alive.

But as time went on it befell that Thorstein was bidden by his brother-in-law to a feast, and so came over to Herd-holt. And one day after meat Thorgerd his sister brought in three little maidens, and setting them on a bench over against Thorstein, asked what he thought of them. He answered, 'They are fair children, sister; but one is by far the fairest; and that one has more the look of us Mere-folk than of thy husband.' 'Aye,' she said, 'and so it may well happen, for that is not my husband's child.' 'How cometh that to pass,' said Thorstein, 'for surely she is thy daughter?' 'Nay,' said his sister, 'not mine, but thine,' and with that told him what had been done, and besought his forgiveness both for his wife and for

herself. And behold as Thorstein looked upon the little maid there came into his heart a great love for the child, and he said to his sister, 'I blame neither of you, but am debtor to you both for thus hiding my folly. And now tell me how you have named her?' Thorgerd answered, 'Helga the Fair.' Thorstein took his little daughter in his arms and kissed her, saying, 'Rightly have you named her, for she is fairer than all others.' And he bade his sister make ready the child to go home with him; and he took her back to his wife Jofrid, and the little maid endeared herself to her father and mother and all her kindred by her winning ways.

Next after Thorstein, Illugi the Black was the man of most account in Burgfirth. He had many sons, but the goodliest was the youth Gunnlaug, who had dark eyes and waving red hair; he was thin in the flank, broad-chested and stately of growth; frank of speech and a good skald; and forasmuch as his words were apt to be stinging, men called him Gunnlaug of the Worm-tongue.

When he was fifteen years old his father sent him to Thorstein to learn law-craft, and he abode with Thorstein some seasons. Gunnlaug and Helga were then near of an age, and Gunnlaug liked far better to sit at chess-playing with Helga than to puzzle over law-craft with her father. They were always together, and a great love grew up between them, albeit for long none knew of it but they twain. Very fair was Helga; fairer than any maid in Iceland before or since. Her hair was like braids of gold, and so plentiful that it clothed her to her feet.

As Thorstein made merry one day in his hall with many other folk Gunnlaug came to him and said, 'Much of law thou hast showed me, but there is one other thing I fain would learn, and that is how to woo a wife.' So Thorstein told him how; but none the more content was Gunnlaug. He said, 'Nay, but I would that thou shouldest try if I understand it aright. Wherefore let me now make as

though I were wooing thy daughter Helga.' Thorstein liked this little; howbeit to please the company he consented, but said, 'Take notice, all folk present, that this wooing is but in sport, and whatsoever words are spoken shall go for naught, neither shall any pledge follow hereon.' Then Helga came forth, blushing like snow at sunrise. And Gunnlaug took the right hand of Thorstein her father, and wooed Helga of him, and named to himself witnesses from them which stood by. Then Gunnlaug asked Thorstein if wooing in that sort would stand good in law. 'Aye,' said he, 'methinks thou hast learned this lesson quicker than thy wont.' And the folk at Thorstein's table waxed merry at all this.

To the south of Burg, down in Mossfell, dwelt Onund, a man of very great riches, who had a bold strong son just come of age, called Rafn the Skald. And Onund gave his son money and a goodly outfit that he might fare away into other lands and see the manners of strange countries and make himself a name.

And after Gunnlaug had sojourned three winters with Thorstein, he also, being minded to fare abroad, came home to Illugi his father and asked for faring goods. So his father fitted him out and bought him a half share in a ship that was going to Norway. But while his partner was making the vessel ready for sea, Gunnlaug must needs go and loiter about at Thorstein's house, for he was fain to be where Helga was. And as the time drew on for the ship to sail he grew wonderly loth to go. Then Thorstein said he would give him a parting gift, and taking him away to the stables where he kept his stud-horses he chose out an unbroken chestnut, very spirited and well bred, and bade Gunnlaug keep it for his own. But Gunnlaug shook his head, saying he cared little about horses and would not have it. Thorstein had four powerful mares, and the best grey horse in Burgfirth; and he prayed Gunnlaug to take his choice amongst them all, for that he certainly

should have a gift. Howbeit Gunnlaug would have naught to do with them. He said, 'If thou art truly minded to give me a gift, give me, I pray, the gift that I shall ask of thee.' 'And what is that?' said Thorstein. 'Helga the Fair,' he answered.

Then Thorstein frowned, and would not speak at all of that matter, but talked of other things till they got back to the house. But as soon as they were set down Gunnlaug said, 'Thou hast not answered me.' 'In sooth, no,' said Thorstein; 'I heed not vain talk.' 'I have spoken my whole mind,' said Gunnlaug, 'and mine are no vain words.' Thorstein answered, 'As yet thou knowest not thy mind. Thou are greatly unsettled, and bound to fare abroad. How then shouldest thou wive? Besides, I do not count thee to be her match. No, I will not hear of it.' Then Gunnlaug fired up and said, 'Not her match! If the son of Illugi the Black be not a match for thy daughter, where wilt thou find in Burgfirth a man of better kin?' Then said Thorstein, 'Wert thou a staid and settled man like thy father, maybe I should not turn thee away. But there is many a man whom I esteem a better match for my daughter than thou. There is Rafn the Skald, there are Thorfinn's seven sons, all men of good estate.' 'And none of them of kin so good as mine,' said Gunnlaug; 'true, thou art of the race of Egil; but hast thou at any time done a deed such as my father when he fought with Thorgrim the Godi and his sons at Thornes Thing?' 'I care not to liken myself to other men,' said Thorstein, 'but this I know, I drave out Steinar, the son of Onund Sjoni, and folk reckoned that was somewhat of a deed.' 'Thou dravest him out forsooth,' said Gunnlaug, 'when thou hadst gotten Egil thy father to come and help thee. But our kin are more wont to trust to their own right hands than to their fathers' swords.' So Thorstein waxed angry and bade him carry his bragging up to the moun-

tains, for that it would avail him little down there in the marshes.

Then came Gunnlaug home to his father and besought him to ride over to Thorstein with him to woo Helga. And Illugi said, 'My son, thy mind ought to be wholly set on ship matters and on thy faring abroad. Why busy thyself now about wife-wooing, the more so as it is not at all to Thorstein's mind?' But Gunnlaug intreated him, saying that he would go abroad just the same, but that he could not give his mind to aught else till this matter was settled. So Illugi rode over with Gunnlaug next day and greeted Thorstein and said, 'My son has had some talk with thee about wooing thy daughter Helga, and I cannot get him away till he knows what will come of it. We are neighbours and friends, long known to one another, and if for old friendship's sake thou canst say yes, I shall be well pleased, and will spare neither land nor gold when Gunnlaug weds.'

Thorstein said, 'I see naught against it, save that Gunnlaug is a roving man. Were he like thee I would not say thee nay.'

Illugi answered, 'Then will our friendship come to an end, for it is plain to me that thou deemest my son not good enough for thee.'

'Nay,' said Thorstein, 'it is not so. It is only because he is unsettled. But rather than lose thy friendship, this much will I do; Helga shall be the vowed maiden of Gunnlaug, and tarry three winters for him, but I will not betroth her to him. In that time let him rove and shape his ways. If in three years he come not back, or coming, if his ways mislike me, I shall be free to wed Helga to whom I will.'

So with that bond the two friends went their way. Gunnlaug and Helga kissed and parted; he with a light heart hied off to his ship and sailed for Norway, and left

her radiant with a joy that shone out through her parting tears.

Yarl Eric and his brother Svein ruled Norway then, and being come to land, Gunnlaug took six of his shipfellows with him, and leaving the rest to unload the merchandise, came up to Hladir, at Drontheim, where the Yarl kept court. The Yarl saw as they came into the hall that Gunnlaug had a great and very painful boil upon his instep, wherefrom came blood and matter as he walked; yet Gunnlaug flinched nothing, but strode along the firmest of them all. And Yarl Eric said, 'Icelander, what ails thy foot?' 'A boil,' said he. 'Why then dost thou not walk lame?' asked the Yarl. Gunnlaug answered, scornful of the pain, 'Why should a man walk lame while both legs are of one length?' The Yarl said, 'How old art thou?' 'Eighteen winters,' answered Gunnlaug. Then said Yarl Eric, 'A man of so sharp a tongue will not live eighteen winters more without good prayers for him.' Gunnlaug muttered something. 'What saidst thou, Icelander?' asked the Yarl. 'Pray rather for thyself than me,' said Gunnlaug. 'What have I to pray for?' said Eric. 'Pray,' answered the Icelander, 'that thou be not slain by a thrall in the first hiding-place whereinto thou sneakest, even as Hakon thy father was.' The Yarl flushed up blood-red, and called to his men to seize the Icelander; but he thought better of it, and bade them instead to tell Gunnlaug, if he held his life of any account, to begone at once and never more set foot within the realm.

So Gunnlaug went down to the shore, and finding a ship bound for England took a passage therein, and after a fair voyage, came sailing up Thames river to London Bridge about the time of autumn.

In those days Æthelred was King of England and kept court in London; and they spake the Norse tongue throughout the land, which indeed prevailed until William

the Bastard won England and changed the tongue to French. And Gunnlaug came to King Æthelred saying, 'I have made a royal song in thine honour which I fain would sing.' Then the King commanded to keep silence whilst the song was sung; and straightway Gunnlaug gave forth a right worthy song, the burden whereof was the might and majesty of the King of England. Well pleased was Æthelred with the skald, and for a song-gift he gave Gunnlaug a scarlet cloak glittering to the hem with gold embroidery, and lined with precious furs. Moreover he made Gunnlaug his man, and took an oath of service from him.

One morning early, when London streets were lonesome, three men met Gunnlaug, and their leader, a burly man of evil eye, named Thororm, stopped him saying, 'Northman, lend me some money, and on such and such a day I will repay thee.' Then said Gunnlaug, 'Thou art unknown to me; nevertheless take the money and see thou keep thy word.' A while after, this coming to the King's ears, Æthelred spake to Gunnlaug, saying, 'Thou hast done foolishly, for the man Thororm is the greatest robber and the strongest viking in the land. Howbeit, take no thought for thy money; I will repay thee; but have no more dealings with this man.' But Gunnlaug said, 'Nay, I have no mind to gather my debts save from my debtors; and a shame it were for us, the King's men, to be put in fear of any.' Therewith Gunnlaug went and sought out the viking and said to him, 'Pay me that thou owest within three days, or else I will come and take it from thee.' Thororm laughed and said that when folk asked him for lendings of gold he was ready to pay them back with steel. So Gunnlaug came again to the King and told how he was going to fight the viking within three days. And the King said, 'It has ill befallen; for this man's eyes can dull the edge of any blade. Nevertheless I have a sword that is proof against evil craft; that shalt

thou take.' And it was so that when Gunnlaug went out to do battle with Thororm, the viking said, 'Let me look upon thy sword, Northman.' And Gunnlaug drew forth his own blade from its sheath and showed him, but the King's sword he kept slung on his left wrist by a loop and hidden behind his shield. The viking said, 'I fear not that sword,' and thereupon set on Gunnlaug and cut his shield atwain. Gunnlaug drew the King's gift, and the viking, weening it had been the sword he had looked upon, recked not so much as to ward off the blow; so the sword smote him and slew him.

Gunnlaug got great renown for this deed all over England; but when spring was come he told the King that he must fare away to other lands. So King Æthelred gave him a gold ring that weighed six ounces, and let him depart, but charged him by his fealty to come back in autumn-tide next year. Then Gunnlaug sailed for Ireland, and came and sang at the court of King Sigtrygg at Dublin. From him he received rich gifts of scarlet raiment, a tunic gold-broidered, and a gold ring worth a mark. Thence he went north to the Orkneys and abode the winter with Yarl Sigurd, and afterwards took ship again and came to Upsala in Sweden, where King Olaf had set up his throne, and all his noblest counsellors and warriors were gathered about him.

And when King Olaf knew Gunnlaug for an Icelandman, he greeted him well and said, 'We have here already a man of some note from thy country. Go thou and sit beside him.' Then Gunnlaug said, 'What is his name, lord, that I may know him?' The King answered, 'Rafn the Skald.'

Gunnlaug had heard the folk at Burgfirth talk of Rafn the Skald who dwelt down south in Mossfell, but had never yet set eyes on him; and when he now beheld Rafn an ill boding seemed to come into his mind. But the two men sate together and made friends, and spake

one to another of their travels; and the foreboding passed.

Now on a day when they were both before the King Gunnlaug spake to King Olaf, saying, 'Lord, I pray thee hearken to a song which I have brought thee.' Rafn spake also, saying, 'O King, I have likewise brought a song, and since I was the first to come to thee, I pray thee hear mine first.' Then Gunnlaug turned upon him saying, 'In what ship came thy father forth, that mine was in the little boat towed behind?' 'Nay,' answered Rafn, 'I will not bandy words with thee. The King shall rule.' And Olaf said, 'We will first hear Gunnlaug's song, since he spake first.'

Then Gunnlaug gave forth a noble song with a fair burden to it; and they which stood about the King with one accord said it was a worthy song; all save Rafn, and he spake not. And the King said, 'What sayest thou, Rafn; is the song well done?' 'Well enough,' he answered; 'big words and sounding rhymes; a lack of smoothness; rough and uncouth as the singer's mood.' Thereon the King bade Rafn put forth his song; and when it was done the King said to Gunnlaug, 'What thinkest thou of this?' Gunnlaug answered, 'Lord, it is like him—smug and pretty, like the singer; mean and little, like the singer's soul; but ill befitting thy degree. Knowest thou not, Rafn, a king-song from a yarl-song, but must needs bring thy short-song without burden to offer to a King? Thou art meeter for yarls' company than kings'.' Thus was Rafn put to shame before the King and all his chiefs; for it was reckoned an ill thing to have brought a yarl-song without burden to a king. He said to Gunnlaug, 'I will talk with thee hereafter on this matter, but not now.' And when they met again Rafn said, 'Thou hast cut our friendship in twain; but the day will come when I shall put thee to no less shame than I have taken at thy hands.' Gunnlaug laughed and in his heart despised the threat.

Soon after, Rafn prayed King Olaf to give him his dismissal, and having received of the King his parting gifts, he set out by sea and came to Iceland. Summer passed, and winter, and summer came again; and Rafn went up to the Thing and there met his kinsman Skapti the Lawman. And he said to him, 'Wilt thou give me thy help in an undertaking I have in hand?' 'Aye,' answered Skapti, 'if it be lawful and right. What is it?' He said, 'I would fain woo Helga the Fair.' Skapti said, 'That may not be, for she is already the vowed maiden of Gunnlaug of the Worm-tongue.' 'The time is out,' answered Rafn, 'and Gunnlaug will not come back. A year ago I left him at King Olaf's court. He is waxed wanton and careth more for new faces than old ones. Help me, I pray thee.'

Then Skapti said he would do what he might, and Thorstein Egilson being likewise at the Thing, he went straightway to his booth and laid before him Rafn's suit, urging his good blood, his great wealth, and his strong kinsmen. Thorstein answered, 'I passed my word to Gunnlaug, and that word I will keep, even beyond what holdeth good in law, lest any man reproach me hereafter. It is true three winters have gone already, but the third summer is not past, and Gunnlaug yet may come. Leave the matter till next summer. Meantime I promise nothing, but then I think I should feel free.' So the Thing broke up and men went home.

Summer passed, and winter; and summer came again. Helga sat and sighed; for Gunnlaug came not, and her betrothal to Rafn was openly talked of. And the time of the Thing being again come round, Thorstein went up thither and met Skapti the Lawman there. And Skapti urged him strongly, saying that he was free both in law and honour. But Thorstein answered, 'I have but one daughter, and I am in great fear lest she should become a cause of strife to any; wherefore let me first go and see

Gunnlaug's father.' With that he went away and found Illugi the Black, and said to him, 'How sayest thou? In all rightwise meaning am I not now free from my pledge to thy son?' Illugi answered, 'I have nought to say further than that thou hast kept thy troth right truly to me and to my son. Of a surety thou art free. Yet I cannot understand why Gunnlaug comes not back to fetch his bride.' Then Thorstein went again to Skapti and made a covenant with him, that if Gunnlaug came not back, Rafn should wed with Helga on the first day of winter; but if he came so much as an hour before the wedding, the covenant should be void.

Now to tell why Gunnlaug came not back to claim his bride. That same summer when Rafn left Olaf's court, Gunnlaug departed from Sweden and sailed for England to redeem his pledge to King Æthelred. He landed at London in the autumn according to his promise; and there he found Æthelred in deadly fear because the great Cnut, but newly come to the throne of Denmark in the room of his father Svein, had vowed to war against England. And since Svein had before come down on England many times, and left a strong garrison of Danishmen under Heming, son of Yarl Harald, to keep their footing upon English ground, Æthelred was in a great strait for fear of the Danes, and bound down every man to stay and fight for him; so Gunnlaug for his oath's sake durst not go. However, as it chanced, winter set in, and changed to summer and back again to winter, but no Danes came. Yet Æthelred kept him lingering there far on to another summer, and then finding, spite of all his fears, that Cnut and his Danes came not, Æthelred let Gunnlaug go. And because Gunnlaug knew the time was overpast, he entered into the first ship he could find going northwards; and that was a ship bound for Norway. This was the same summer when Thorstein made the covenant with Skapti.

Gunnlaug feared not now to go to Norway, save for the wasting of the time, inasmuch as some messengers of Yarl Eric at the Orkneys by chance had heard him sing a song in praise of their lord, and Yarl Eric, learning this, had caused it to be made known that there was peace henceforth for Gunnlaug through his realm. So being come to Drontheim he was well greeted of Yarl Eric, at his court at Hladir. But the last ship bound for Iceland had sailed five days before. Nevertheless Yarl Eric, having learned what errand he was on, said that Gunnlaug should not be delayed from his bride by any slackness on his part. And straightway the Yarl had a swift barge put out to sea and manned with the brawniest fellows he could pick. 'Now,' said he, 'row hard for Hallfred Vandræda-Skald's ship; that left the last; and since for five days the wind has blown dead on shore he can have made but little headway.' So they rowed, and by good-hap overtook the ship; and Hallfred took Gunnlaug aboard, and a fair wind arose and bore them away toward Iceland. And all that voyage Gunnlaug made songs of his remembered maiden.

But as ill-luck would have it, though they came to shore two weeks before the first day of winter, they landed in Hraunhaven, a weary way from Burgfirth. And no sooner were they come out of the ship than a lout of a farmer's son, named Thord, fell to wrestling with the mariners, and got the better of them all, so that it was settled that next day he should match himself against Gunnlaug. On the morrow they had a wrestling bout together, and the end of it was that Thord, having both feet kicked from under him, got a fall upon his back that drave the breath nigh out of him. Nevertheless in that wrestling Gunnlaug put his ancle out of joint. Stout at heart as ever, he tried to walk, but could not, and fell down in a swoon. However, his companions got the ancle into joint again, and having swathed it up,

went about the country to borrow horses for their journey. This took some days, for there were twelve of them in all, and so it befell that Gunnlaug and his comrades rode into Burgfirth on that same Saturday night in mid-October when, the wedding being over, Rafn sat at the marriage feast with fair Helga, his bride.

So Gunnlaug came too late upon that winter night. He heard the sound of merriment at Thorstein's house, and saw the cheerful wood fire gleam as he rode by; and knew it was too late. He durst not go in, but rode to his father's house, and there abode apart from his kin. He spake but little; and it seemed as though the winter gloom had fallen upon him.

The bride, folks said, was drooping. And some called to mind the old saw, 'First love is last forgot.'

Many a wooing comes of a wedding. And it befell at Helga's marriage-feast that a man named Sverting wooed Hungerd the daughter of Thorod to be his wife. They were to wed at Yule-tide, and Rafn and Helga were bidden to the marriage. So the feast came to an end and Rafn rode home to Mossfell with his bride.

But Helga had seen folks whispering together, and here and there had caught a word whereby she knew that Gunnlaug had come home. And after that Rafn gat small comfort of his wife. She would pace about her strange new home like something in a cage; her husband's riches she esteemed for naught; and of all the fair raiment and bright jewels which he gave her to put on she recked nothing. But round the farmstead, or away upon the hills, she wandered at her will; least wretched only when alone, and free to call on Gunnlaug's name.

Now at Yule-tide Illugi the Black and his son Gunnlaug were bidden to Hungerd's wedding feast, which was to be held at Skaney. And Illugi made ready to go, but Gunnlaug stirred not from the hall. And when they urged him he only answered, 'I am not going.' Then

said his father to him, 'Sit not here for ever grieving. Helga is another's. It is now too late.' 'Aye,' said his son, 'too late.' 'Then get thee up and wear a merry face. 'Tis better than to wear thine heart upon thy sleeve. But waste not time in sorrow for a woman. There are many in the world; and a man like thee may take his choice.' Then Gunnlaug said that he would go; and he arose and came with his father to the wedding-feast at Skaney.

There, on the high seat next the bride, sat Helga the Fair, her cheeks snow-pale, and a wistful longing in her eyes. Gunnlaug looked on her, and the colour flushed into her face as though the sun had shone. He was the comeliest man in all the company, and richly clad in the gold and scarlet raiment which the King of Ireland gave him. Helga stole many a glance at him, whereby the truth of the saying was made plain, 'If a woman fain would hide her love, her eyes must needs betray her.' But not until the end of the feast could they get speech together. Then, while the men were making ready to depart, Helga and Gunnlaug talked for a little space. Bitterly spake Gunnlaug, and he said, 'A curse on them which snatched the joy-cup from our thirsting lips! A curse on them which wedded thee to gold and lands, and cared not that they made an endless winter of our lives!' Tears were in Helga's eyes, and tears in his. But she shook back her heavy golden hair and lifted her lips to him. In both his hands he took the upturned face, and kissed it tenderly. So they talked and talked, in joy and bitterness, until the folk came back arrayed for journeying.

Then Gunnlaug said that he had not yet given a wedding-gift to Helga, and he brought forth the cloak, King Æthelred's gift, that blazed with embroidery of golden thread, so bright that one could scarcely see the scarlet ground for gold; and this he gave to Helga. Then he

leapt to horse and rode a-gallop across the farmstead. Rafn, it happened, stood in his way, and had to spring out of the road. And Gunnlaug drew his horse up short upon his haunches, saying, 'Why slink away? Have I yet threatened thee? Or dost thou know that there is something to be settled betwixt us?' Rafn answered, 'What folly is this, that we twain should be at strife for the sake of one woman! I have made my choice. The world is surely wide enough for thee to choose in. Doubtless in lands over-sea there are maids as fair as Helga.' Gunnlaug said, 'As to that I care not; there is but one woman in the world for me.' Then he got off his horse, and straightway would have fought with Rafn, but Illugi and Thorstein came up and would not suffer it. So Illugi took Gunnlaug home, and Thorstein led Rafn away.

But after she had met Gunnlaug, Helga would have no more fellowship with Rafn; neither took she pleasure in aught save the glittering cloak which Gunnlaug gave her. And Rafn had sorrow and great heaviness; for he loved his wife with all his heart and soul.

Now in summer-time, when men came to the Thing, Gunnlaug came also; and after the lawsuits were done for the first day, he stood up in the midst of the court and cried, 'Is Rafn the son of Onund here?' And when Rafn had answered to his name, Gunnlaug said, 'Take notice all men present that since Rafn has got to wife the maiden vowed to me, I call upon him to meet me on the holm of Axe river within three days.' Rafn said that he would be ready. And it being lawful in those days to call a man on holm for wrong-doing, the people from the Thing went over on the third day to Axe-river to see that all was done according to law. The custom was for each man to deal one blow, and he that was first wounded must pay three marks of silver. Rafn, being the challenged man, dealt the first. He smote at

Gunnlaug's shield so mightily that the sword brake off at the hilt, and the broken blade rebounding, struck Gunnlaug's cheek and drew the blood. Thereupon the kinsmen of both ran in and parted them, and there arose a great disputing, inasmuch as Gunnlaug claimed that Rafn was overcome, he being weaponless; while Rafn declared Gunnlaug, being wounded, to be beaten. Thus, until this dispute could be settled, Gunnlaug was not suffered to deal his blow. Wherefore the people went back to the Thing and argued the matter in law; and since they could come to no agreement whatever about it, a law was passed whereby going on holm was thenceforth forbidden. So that was the last holm-gang in Iceland, and Gunnlaug gat no quittance for the blow.

But after this Rafn was ill at ease; for his wife would not endure his love, but grieved always after Gunnlaug; moreover it was noised abroad that she had met him once down by Axe river. And because of these things lightly esteeming his life, Rafn came to Gunnlaug saying, 'There is joy neither for me nor thee while both of us are alive. Wherefore next summer let us fare abroad, where none of our kin can hinder us, and we will fight the quarrel out.' Gunnlaug answered, 'Thou hast a brave heart; and these are welcome words to me.' Wherefore, despite all their kinsmen could do, they fitted out each of them a ship in the summer, and sailed for Norway. But many things befell both upon the voyage, so that Rafn waited two winters at Lifang in Drontheim and had no tidings of his enemy. And afterward when Gunnlaug reached Norway, and came to Yarl Eric at Hladir, their errand had got abroad and the Yarl forbade them to fight in his dominions. Gunnlaug abode another winter at the Yarl's court, silent and downcast because Rafn would not move out of Lifang, and he durst not fight him there. One day in his walks Gunnlaug came upon a mob of courtiers ringed about

two boys who fought in jest. One lad called himself Gunnlaug, the other Rafn; and in their play they said that Icelanders cared nothing to be avenged, and soon forgot their wrongs: and the bystanders laughed and made merry, saying that the two foes when they met would get no more hurt than their namesakes in the ring; with many such-like words.

Gunnlaug looked on and held his peace. But he came to Yarl Eric, saying that he could no longer bear these taunts, but that the ban upon their fighting must be taken off. Now Yarl Eric, having beforetime understood that Rafn was on his way from Lifang into Sweden, scrupled no longer about the matter, but gave him leave to go, and sent guides with him for the journey.

But when Gunnlaug came to Lifang, Rafn, who had tarried there longer than Yarl Eric wotted of, was only a day's journey on his road. So Gunnlaug made haste and followed after him; nevertheless, finding at sundown that he only came to the place where Rafn was the night before, he travelled day and night, and on the third morning, reaching Dingness at sunrise, he looked upon his foe.

Gunnlaug said, 'It is well that I have found thee.' Rafn answered, 'Whether ill or well, a fated thing has come to pass.'

Four men were with Rafn and six with Gunnlaug. And Rafn said, 'Choose whether we two alone shall fight, or whether all of us man to man?' But the men on either side having no mind to stand by and look on, Gunnlaug made his two guides sit down to bide the issue, charging them to take no part in the combat. So five stood up to five, and fought till only one stood up to one. Gunnlaug and Rafn being left alone to fight their mortal strife, rushed furiously together, maddened with the memory of old wrongs. Mighty were the blows they dealt; but Gunnlaug bare the better sword, King

Æthelred's gift. At last he made a feint at Rafn's head to make him lift his shield, then swung the sword down athwart Rafn's knee, and hewed his leg from under him. Yet Rafn fell not; he limped away to where a tree had been cut down, and set the bleeding stump upon the tree-root; then cried, 'Fight on; for I must do this battle to the uttermost.'

'Nay,' answered Gunnlaug, 'I will not fight a man so maimed.'

'Had I but a drink of water,' said Rafn, 'I could withstand thee yet.'

Gunnlaug said, 'Betray me not if I fetch it thee.'

And Rafn sware to him, saying, 'I will not betray thee.'

Then Gunnlaug went and dipped up water in his helmet, and brought to him. But Rafn, while he put forth his left hand to take it, with the other drave down his sword into Gunnlaug's skull, and smote him a mortal wound.

'Ill hast thou done,' cried Gunnlaug, 'thus to break thy faith and basely to requite a kindly deed.'

'Yea, I know it,' answered Rafn; 'I have done exceeding shamefully. Yet, how could I die, and give up fair Helga to thine arms?'

So the two men fought on; and in the end Rafn was slain, and Gunnlaug fell back swooning on the ground.

Yarl Eric's two guides washed the wound in Gunnlaug's skull, and when they had bound it up, they gat him on a horse and brought him back to Lifang. There he lay three days; and on the third day, after he had been shriven by the priest, he died.

Now Illugi the Black away in Iceland dreamed that his son Gunnlaug came and stood before him covered with blood; and Onund that same night saw his son Rafn in the like evil case. And when the tidings came and both knew certainly what had befallen, Illugi went to Onund saying, 'Make atonement to me for my son.'

Onund answered, 'Are we not both in the same plight? Yet, do I ask thee for atonement for my son?' Then said Illugi, 'My wrath shall evermore pursue thee and thy kin.' That autumn Illugi came with thirty men to Mossfell seeking vengeance. Onund and his household took refuge in the church, but Illugi caught two of Onund's sons; one he slew, and had the legs smitten off the other. And yet again in the spring a son of Illugi slew another of Rafn's kinsmen. But Onund gat no redress for all these slayings.

Helga the Fair sat lonely in her father's house, her mind dwelling always upon Gunnlaug. Across her lap she laid the shining cloak which he had given her, gazing evermore thereon and plucking at the golden threads. So the time went by, and her father wedded her to Thorkel, a busy-minded man, wealthy in land and goods. Still she sat all day with the cloak upon her knees, and plucked the threads out one by one. And as the years passed, children came about the house, and grew up lads and lasses, and gladdened Thorkel's heart. Yet Helga had no other joy than to gaze upon the fading cloak and pull the scanty threads away. Then, as time wore on, it came to pass that a heavy sickness visited Thorkel's home-folk; and Helga fell ailing, yet would not keep her bed. And so on a Saturday night, as she sat in the fire-hall leaning her head on Thorkel's knees, she said, 'Bring me again the cloak that was Gunnlaug's gift.' And when they had brought it, she spread it out upon her lap as at other times, to gaze upon it. Then she sat up and plucked the last gold threads away, and sank back dead into her husband's arms.

BURNT NJAL.

I. THE STORY OF GUNNAR, NJAL'S FRIEND.

When Harald Fairhair began to rule over Norway, he put away the old laws, and made a decree that freemen should henceforth pay taxes and always be the king's men, instead of rendering service only in time of need as heretofore. For this cause many freemen strove long against the King, until, being worsted continually, they sold all their possessions and came out from the land. Faring away to Iceland, they made themselves a new home. Thence they roved the sea for plunder, and oftentimes came down and harried the coasts of Norway because of their bitterness against the King.

Some threescore years after the Norsemen were come out to Iceland, there arose amongst them a man very wise in law whose name was Njal. He dwelt at Bergthorsknoll, and was wealthy and gentle-minded, and greatly looked up to of all folk; his match for law was not to be found, and he was foresighted, knowing things to come. Njal was ever ready to give counsel, and when he counselled a man in aught, it was sure to be for the best. His face was handsome but beardless; he had to wife Bergthora, a brave-hearted woman, and they had three strong sons, named Skarp-hedinn, Grim, and Helgi, and as many daughters.

Now though Njal was greatly beloved of all men, he had

one friend dearer to him than any, and that was Gunnar of Lithend, the most matchless warrior in Iceland. Tall and straight and strong, Gunnar had bright blue eyes and ruddy cheeks, and thick fair hair which fell in curls. None would contend with him at any warlike game, for when he handled sword three blades seemed flashing in the air at once, and he had equal skill to fight with either hand. With the bow he never missed his mark. He could outleap, outrun, outswim all men. He was dauntless as a lion, yet gentle and courteous withal, a fast friend, and a bountiful man. He and Njal had long been friends; Njal advised him in all that he undertook, and they vowed that nothing should ever sunder their friendship.

Now Gunnar being newly come home from faring abroad, having gotten both fame and treasure, rode to the Thing, clad in scarlet clothes and with a gold ring on his arm. And as he wandered among the booths there came forth a fair woman arrayed in a red kirtle and over all a cloak of needlework. Her hair fell over her bosom in long locks, and she had turned the ends in beneath her silver girdle. She came to Gunnar, and with nought of bashfulness straightway began to ask concerning his voyages and battles, saying that she was minded to talk with him. She said that her name was Hallgerda, and that she was Hauskuld's daughter. So the two fell talking long together, and presently Gunnar asked if she were wed. 'Nay,' she answered, 'there are few men bold enough to wed with me. Folks say, too, I am not easy to please in husbands.' Then said Gunnar, 'If I were bold enough should I displease?' She answered, 'If this be truly thy mind, go ask me from my father.'

Then went Gunnar away and sought out Hauskuld's booth. Hauskuld and his brother Hrut were within, and Gunnar having told his errand, Hauskuld said to his brother, 'How sayest thou, Hrut? For I find it hard to answer in this matter.' Then spake Hrut, 'Gunnar, thou

art a brave fellow and all that is to be desired for a match; but I will not cheat thee. Hallgerda is older than thou, and has been twice wed aforetime. She is a widow with an evil name, in that she compassed the death of both the husbands she has had already. Each smote her on the face, and ever mindful of the blow she rested not till Thiostolf her foster-father slew them. Hallgerda is no match for a man of unblemished fame.' But Gunnar made light of it, saying that he was content to abide by the bargain. Wherefore Hrut said, 'It is plainly of no avail to reason with a man whose heart is set upon a woman; and if ye two are fain to run the risk, it concerns none else.' So Hallgerda was sent for and betrothed to Gunnar; and on a set day the marriage was made at Lithend.

One winter, being bidden to a feast at Njal's homestead, Gunnar brought his wife Hallgerda with him. She sat herself unbidden in the chief seat upon the cross bench, and when Thorhalla, the wife of Njal's youngest son, came into the hall and walked up to the bench, Hallgerda spread out her robes and would not give her place. Then came Bergthora to her, saying, 'Give place to my son's wife; for I will be ruler in this my house,' and therewith sat Thorhalla beside her. But presently when Bergthora went round with water to wash the hands of the guests, Hallgerda took hold of her hand and reviled her, saying, 'Thou hast hangnails and thieves' fingers—a fitting wife in sooth for beardless Njal.' 'Aye,' said Bergthora, 'and being so fitly matched we dwell in peace together. To thee it may seem strange that a woman should live happily with one lord so long, and never have plotted his death.' Then Hallgerda cried out to her husband, saying, 'Gunnar, avenge me of this woman's slander.' Straightway strode Gunnar across the hall and said to his wife, 'Make thyself ready and go home. Beneath thine own roof thou mayest wrangle to thine heart's content, but thou shalt not befool

me into breaking friendship with Njal, whom I honour more than any man.' So Gunnar took her home. But thenceforward Hallgerda sought how she might requite Bergthora for this saying.

Between the homesteads of Gunnar and Njal was a wood wherein both hewed timber as they needed. And it fell out while Gunnar was away upon a journey that Hallgerda sent her woodman out to slay Bergthora's woodman in the forest. The man did her bidding, and Hallgerda looked that this should embroil her husband with Njal. But far from this, when Gunnar heard it, he went to Njal and said, 'My wife and one of her men have slain a carle of thine. But why should we be ill friends because of it? Put a price upon his life and I will pay it thee.' Njal answered, 'I foresee that thou wilt be sore tried with this woman, but our friendship shall not be broken at her hands. Thou shalt pay me twelve ounces of silver for the slaying; or, if the price seem too great to thee, make thine own award; I am content.' So the money was paid. Nevertheless Bergthora was not content till she could be avenged. Wherefore she likewise sent out a man who slew Hallgerda's woodman. Njal came to Gunnar and paid him back the price he had received, but never a word of anger passed between them. After that the feud went on for years between the women, and there were many slayings both of house carles and freemen on either side; yet for all this the wives sought vainly to stir their husbands up to strife. Njal and Gunnar always met, and paid or took the price which either awarded, and their friendship only grew the closer for the contentions of their women.

A Swede named Sigmund came over the sea, and Gunnar gave him winter lodging. But while he abode in the house Hallgerda won him to her will, and set him to lie in wait to slay Thord, who was one of Njal's kinsmen. Gunnar got an inkling of what was brewing, and sent

straightway to warn Njal of it. The evening that Njal got the tidings he was walking with Thord on the highway when suddenly Thord stopped and pointing with his finger, cried, 'See there!' 'I see nothing,' answered Njal. 'Nothing!' said Thord; 'what is that goat which lieth in the road all dabbled with blood?' 'No goat is there,' said Njal; 'but a fetch perchance that goeth before thee, to warn thee of doom.' So Njal bade Thord ride away east for safety. But a flooded river which he could not cross delayed him, and on the third night from the time when he saw the fetch, Thord fell dead by Sigmund's hand.

Njal's sons were eager to avenge the slaying of their kinsman upon Gunnar and all his house, but Njal still made the peace and took a money price of two hundreds in silver.

Yet Sigmund tarried on at the homestead at Lithend, and Hallgerda in a little while by her blandishments and fair words prevailed upon him to make a song befouling Njal and his sons, and to sing it where it should come to their ears. Njal heard of it and bade his sons take no heed thereof. But one night when he went to bed he missed his sons' spears and shields from the wall, and said to his wife Bergthora, 'Where is Skarp-hedinn? And where are his brothers Helgi and Grim?' She answered, 'They went out a while ago a-fishing.' Njal said, 'Men seldom fish with spear and shield.' That night was Sigmund slain. Howbeit Njal made atonement to Gunnar with the same two hundreds in silver which he had received; and they passed their words always to settle any matter which came between them in like friendly fashion.

Now one year there fell a great dearth upon the land; the sheep and cattle died for want of pasture, and the scanty corn crops withered in the ear. Gunnar shared his hay and meat among the people so long as they lasted; but his hand was so liberal and the need so great, that

presently he began to be in want. Then Gunnar went to Otkell, a rich man but very covetous, who dwelt at Kirkby, and sought to buy food of him. Otkell had a friend named Skamkell, on whose counsel he always acted, a great liar and lickspittle, who fawned about him and puffed him up with evil counsels. And being advised of this fellow, Otkell said to Gunnar, 'In sooth I have stores in plenty, but I am minded neither to sell nor give to thee; so go thy way.' Then the men which came with Gunnar urged him to take what he needed by force and lay down the worth of it. But Gunnar scorned to do so, and rode away. Howbeit Njal heard that he was in want of food, and without waiting to be asked laded twenty horses with hay and meat and sent them to Gunnar, saying, 'A friend's gift to a friend; and, by our friendship, I pray thee in time to come seek all that thou mayest lack from me alone.' Gunnar sent back word, 'Good are thy gifts, but better than all gifts is thy friendship.'

But Gunnar's wife was stirred up to anger against Otkell because of his avarice. She had a thrall named Malcolm whom she had bought not long before from Otkell, and she sent out this man at night with two horses, charging him to break open Otkell's storehouse, and having laden the horses with provisions, to burn down the storehouse so as to hide all trace of theft. So Malcolm fared away to his old master's homestead at Kirkby. The house-dog knew him and did not bark. Malcolm laded the horses with butter and cheese, and burnt the storehouse to the ground. But going home, one of his shoe-thongs breaking, he took out his knife, and having cut a new thong from the leathern belt about his waist, went on his way. When he was come back to Lithend he missed his knife and belt, and knew that he had left them on Otkell's land, yet durst not go back to fetch them.

Next day as Hallgerda set out the food upon the

board, Gunnar said, 'Whence came the cheese and butter? We have made no such things on the farm for many a month.' Hallgerda said, 'It ill befitteth a man to busy himself about housekeeping. Eat and ask no questions.' But he said, 'Nay, I will be no partaker with thieves,' and waxing angry, gave her a slap on the face, sent the food from the table, and had meal brought in instead. 'That,' said he, 'is honest food, for it comes from Njal.' Hallgerda grew sullen and said, 'One day I shall make thee remember that blow.'

Otkell was not a little vexed for the burning of his store-house, but wist not how it came to pass till Skamkell brought a knife and belt which he had found hard by the place. 'Knowest thou aught of these things?' said Skamkell. 'Surely I do,' said Otkell; 'they belong to Malcolm the thrall whom I sold to Gunnar.' 'Then keep thy counsel,' said this busybody, 'till I get to the bottom of the matter.' With that Skamkell went away to a man of no little cunning, named Mord, who had always envied Gunnar, and asked his help. Mord said, 'Give me three marks of silver, and I will promise to find whether any of the goods are in Gunnar's house.' So the bargain being made, Mord sent out women to go from house to house peddling small wares, and bade them take note of what they received from each house in return for their goods. In a fortnight's time the women came back with big bundles of things which they had gathered. When Mord looked over the bundles he found about half a cheese cut in thick slices. 'Where got you this?' he asked. 'From Hallgerda at Lithend; she was very bountiful to us,' the women said. 'Aye,' thought Mord, 'folks are always liberal with what is not their own;' so taking the cheese to Otkell's house he bade him bring out his wife's cheese-mould. Then he laid the slices together and set them in the mould, and they fitted it in every way.

But while Otkell and Skamkell were scheming how best to break the matter to Gunnar, who should come in but Gunnar himself, who said, 'I find that thou hast suffered a great loss through the plotting of my wife and that worthless thrall I bought of thee. Wherefore I come to make amends, and I make thee this offer: let the best men round the country-side settle the matter.' But Skamkell said, 'Seldom an offer sounds so fair and yet is so unjust; for all men hold by thee, whereas Otkell has few friends.' Gunnar said, 'Then I will utter an award myself. I am willing to restore double for all that Otkell has lost.' 'Nay,' answered Skamkell, 'this shall not be, for it is not thy right to make an award, but Otkell's.' Gunnar said, 'I am not dealing with thee, Skamkell, but with Otkell. Come now, Otkell, thou hast refused my two offers, but I would keep friends with thee. Utter an award thyself; whatsoever it be I will abide by it.' But Otkell turned to Skamkell and whispered, 'How shall I answer?' Skamkell whispered back, 'Say nay, and that thou wouldst rather leave it in the hands of men of law.' Wherefore Otkell answered, 'The offer is not amiss, but I cannot make an award till I have seen Gizur the White and Geir the priest.' 'Well,' said Gunnar, 'I have made three good offers by which I am ready to abide, but I shall do no more,'—and therewith rode away.

Now instead of going himself Otkell sent Skamkell to see the lawmen. And when Gizur the White and Geir the priest heard the man's tale they said, 'No one could have made fairer offers than Gunnar has done; let Otkell choose which of them he will: it is no case for law.' Howbeit Skamkell cared little to take this message to his master since it condemned his own counsels; wherefore being come back to Otkell he lied to him and said that the lawmen advised him to summon Hallgerda for stealing the victuals, and Gunnar for partaking of them.

So a suit was set on foot; but when it came on for hearing at the Thing and the truth was testified to by Gizur the White and Geir the priest, Otkell was put to shame, and the end of it was that Gunnar, being left to make his own award, stood up and thus uttered it: 'For the storehouse and the food I will pay thee, Otkell, the full price. I will pay no fine for the thrall, because thou didst hide his faults, but I award him back to thee. And now, since thou hast summoned me wrongfully and in mockery, I award myself no less a sum than the house and the burnt stores were worth. So there will be no need for money to pass between us.' Folk thought it rather hard on Otkell; but none pitied him, since all believed that he had brought it on himself. So hands were shaken on the bargain, and Gunnar rode away with great honour.

One day in the springtime Gunnar was sowing corn in a newly ploughed field on his farmstead, and as he scattered the grain from the sieve in his left hand he stooped over his work heeding nothing but his sowing. Otkell came riding a-gallop over the field and saw not Gunnar till he was close upon him. He pulled the bridle athwart and swerved his horse, but in that moment Gunnar stood upright, and Otkell drave one of his spurs by misadventure into Gunnar's ear and gashed it open. Howbeit, Otkell stayed not, but rode on; and Skamkell hearing of it, noised the affair abroad, and said that Gunnar had shed tears at the pain.

Gunnar said naught, but went indoors and took down his sword and spear and shield and helm. He took from the nail where it hung a great war-bill which he won in battle with Hallgrim. A mighty weapon it was; and there was this about it, that whensoever a man was to be slain with that bill something sang in it so loud that it might be heard a long way off. And when Gunnar had armed himself and had gotten the bill in his hands he

leapt upon his horse and rode away. As he went, his mother Rannveig from an upper room heard a shrill singing in the war-bill, and went and awakened Gunnar's brother Kolskegg, saying, 'Rise up and follow after Gunnar, for men will die to-day; the bill gave out the death-sound.'

At Rangriver, against the ford at Hof, Gunnar and Kolskegg came upon Otkell and Skamkell riding with six men. Gunnar and his brother got off their horses, and called to the others to do the like and guard themselves. Otkell and his band were nowise loth, seeing how the numbers were, and quickly gathered about the two. Then flashed Gunnar's sword so swiftly that no eye could follow it; he smote down two of the men, then took the bill in both his hands, and thrusting Skamkell through the midst, lifted him up and cast his body headlong in the muddy ford. Otkell smote with his sword at Gunnar's knees, but Gunnar leapt in the air and avoided the blade, and before Otkell could recover himself the bill was through his chest. So Gunnar slew six and Kolskegg two; and they left all eight men dead about the ford.

Gunnar rode straightway off to Njal to tell what had happened. And Njal said, 'This need not turn out either for thy loss or for thy dishonour so far as I can foresee, though it will be the beginning of many manslayings.' Then Gunnar prayed him for some wise counsel to guide him in time to come; and Njal said, 'See to it in all thy quarrels that thou slay no more than one man of the same stock; so shalt thou come to be an old man; but when thou forgettest this warning thou shalt have but a little while to live.' And Gunnar said, 'Since thou knowest so well what will happen to other men, canst thou tell what shall be the manner of thine own death?' Njal answered, 'Yea, I know it.' 'How will it be?' said Gunnar. 'It will be a death,' he said, 'more dreadful than any man would think, neither would any believe it if he were told.'

When the suits for these slayings were laid at the Thing, Njal helped Gunnar with his wise counsels, and the award was that Otkell's death should be set off against the wound which Gunnar got from the spur; Skamkell, for his lying and for stirring up the strife, was to be unatoned; and for the rest of the men fines were to be paid according to their worth.

After this Gunnar and his brother had a battle with fourteen men, which arose out of a horse-fight, all of whom they slew; and Njal by his wisdom settled matters at the Thing so that Gunnar suffered little loss and got great honour. But Thorgeir, a kinsman of one of the men that was slain, went to Mord and promised him money if he would show some way whereby he might have vengeance upon Gunnar. Mord said; 'This I know, that Njal has foretold that whenever Gunnar slays twice in the same stock it shall prove his bane. Now Otkell has left a son who is both strong and brave-hearted; wherefore I counsel thee to drag him into a quarrel with Gunnar; and when ye two are together in the affray, do thou guard thyself and hold back; so Gunnar shall slay Otkell's son and accomplish his own doom; but thou shalt flee away.'

So Thorgeir went away to work out this plot. By the gift of a spear inlaid with gold he first made friends with Otkell's son, who being himself true-hearted and guileless judged others to be the like. Then Thorgeir raked up a matter long gone by, about a cornfield which Gunnar was to have given Otkell as atonement for an old slaying, but which he afterwards redeemed with a money price. Little by little he wrought upon the young man's mind, and made him feel aggrieved at Gunnar's keeping back a piece of land the worth whereof was now threefold what Otkell got for it. So at last Thorgeir hardened the heart of Otkell's son against Gunnar, and they both agreed to fall upon him unawares. But they durst not seek him at

home, for Gunnar had a faithful hound named Sam, which was gifted with more than a man's wit to know a friend from a foe, and would lay down his life for his master. Wherefore they got four and twenty men together and made an ambush by Rangriver, where they lay in wait till Gunnar should ride down to see after his house-carles working across the ford.

Now as Gunnar rode down that way with his brother Kolskegg, he perceived blood sweat out upon his bill and stand in drops upon the blade. And while he marvelled he espied men rising from an ambush. Gunnar strung his bow and slew many of them with his arrows, and wounded many more before they could come up with him. Then clutched he the war-bill in his hands and ran upon the men. He hewed one man's legs from under him; another he smote in twain; but the rest drew back from the sweep of the bill. Then Thorgeir egged on Otkell's son, saying, 'Little would one think that thou hadst a father to avenge.' With that Otkell's son ran in and drave his spear into Gunnar's shield. With a twist of his shield Gunnar brake the spear-head off; then he thrust his bill through the youth's body, and hoisting him aloft flung him lifeless far out into Rangriver. Then Thorgeir and his fellows turned and fled.

Njal was very heavy at heart when Gunnar told him of the affray, and he said, 'From this time forth beware of thyself; for thou hast slain twice in one stock, and evil will surely come of it. But above all see thou hold to the terms of the settlement which shall be made.'

The suits being brought, it was agreed on both sides to take the award of twelve men. And they gave it that money fines should be paid for all the slayings, but that Gunnar and Kolskegg must go abroad three winters, or in default might be slain by the suitors or their kinsmen without atonement. So Gunnar and Kolskegg, having passed their words to go abroad, went home and got things

together for seafaring, and took their passage in a ship. And all being ready, the two brothers bade their mother farewell and rode away from the house. But they had scarce passed their own boundaries when Gunnar turned in his saddle to take a last look at his home. And he said, 'How fair is Lithend in the summer sunshine! Never has it seemed to me so fair. The corn-fields are yellowing to harvest. They are carrying the hay from the home-field—how sweet it smells! I cannot leave the old place, brother; by my life I will not leave it!' Then Kolskegg urged him, saying, 'Do not so shamefully as to go back and break the atonement left to thy good faith; for surely if thou dost it shall befall even as Njal has foretold.' He said, 'I care not what may come of it. Lithend is grown so dear to me to-day I cannot leave it.' Kolskegg answered, 'Brother, if so thy mind is set, abide here. But I will keep my pledge and fare abroad; neither shall I ever return more; for this resolve will cost thee thy life, and then there will be nothing left in Lithend to bring me back again.' So the brothers parted; Kolskegg went to his ship, and Gunnar turned his horse's head and came home.

It soon got whispered about that Gunnar abode still at Lithend, and would not go out of Iceland; and at the next Thing he was proclaimed an outlaw. Then Thorgeir and Mord and Gizur the White gathered together forty of the kinsmen of those men whom Gunnar had slain, and planned how best to attack him. Njal heard of it and came and warned Gunnar of what was brewing, and said, 'Let my sons, Skarp-hedinn and Grim, come and abide with thee in the house; for they will both give their lives for thee.' But Gunnar said, 'Nay; thy sons shall not be slain for my sake; that were a poor requital for thy goodness to me. But I pray thee, if anything befall me, see after my son Hogni, who is dear to me: I say nothing of my other son Grani, whom I had by Hallgerda, for he is his mother's

boy, and has ever been froward to my mind.' Njal promised him, and went his way. Gunnar scorned to remain in hiding; he rode to the Things and all other meetings of men as aforetime, and held his head on high. None of his friends spake of his outlawry, or turned their backs on him; and none of his foes for very shame durst lay hands on him openly.

But Mord and Thorgeir and Gizur the White, with their forty fellows, gathered about Gunnar's homestead one day before sunrise. They heard the baying of the hound, and knowing that they must first destroy him, they sent six of their band to go and secure the bonder who lived on the next farm. Him they fetched from his bed and bound with cords, threatening to take his life unless he would go and bring them the dog. The man went, and called the hound by name; Sam knew him, and fawned and leapt about him whilst he unloosed the chain. The hound followed him down the pathway and far across the farmstead till they came upon the band of men. Then seeing how he had been betrayed, the dog flew at the bonder, pinned him by the throat and tare him to pieces. But the men smote him with their axes as he worried the bonder's flesh, and one of the axe-blades sank into his brain. The hound lifted his head, and giving a strange howl like the cry of a man in despair, set off and ran, and coming to the homestead, found his way into the chamber where Gunnar slept. He leapt upon the bed and licked his master's face; then stretched himself by his master's side and died. Gunnar awoke and said, 'Sorely hast thou been treated, Sam, my fosterling; and I take it as a warning that our two deaths shall not be far apart.'

When the men were come nigh the house they would fain know whether Gunnar was at home, and Thorgrim the Easterling said he would climb up the pillars of the house and look into Gunnar's chamber. But when

Thorgrim was come up under the roof-beams Gunnar saw him peeping through the window-slits, and thrusting out his bill smote him through the middle; so the man fell down backwards to the ground. Gizur ran to Thorgrim, and said, 'Tell us, is Gunnar at home?' Thorgrim answered, 'I cannot tell; but this I know right well, that his bill is at home;' and so saying he died.

Gunnar gathered a pile of arrows before him and shot out from the windows at his foes. No arrow missed its mark. Then the men drew back and took shelter in the outhouses, and anon came out to hack at the doorways of the homestead. But the house was strongly built of timber, and Gunnar's arrows searched them through and through, so that they could not abide these onslaughts long together.

Presently Gizur said, 'Lo, I saw Gunnar put forth his arm from the window and take an arrow off the roof; he must be running short of shafts within doors. Now let us make a fresh attack.' Then by Mord's counsel they fetched ropes, and having thrown them over the roof beams, they made fast the other ends to a rock, and twisting them tight with levers dragged the roof off from the hall. Still Gunnar shot out arrows and kept the men back, till one of them stealthily climbed the house-pillars, and smiting in at the window with his sword, cut Gunnar's bowstring asunder. In a moment Gunnar's bill was through his body and the man fell backwards dead upon the ground; but others clambered up, and it was hard work to guard the roofless loft on all four sides from them which came. Then Gunnar called to his wife Hallgerda and said, 'Quick, now! Take two locks of thy long hair, and do thou and my mother twist them into a bowstring for me.' His wife laughed coldly. 'Does aught hang upon it?' said she. 'Aye,' he answered, 'my life hangs on it; for with naught but my bow can I keep these men at bay. Quick, the bowstring!'

Then said Hallgerda, 'Thinkest thou I have forgotten the blow on the face which thou gavest me? What is it to me whether thou holdest out for a short while or a long? And so thy life hangs on my hair! Thy mother Rannveig's is too short!' She loosed her ample locks and shook them to her knees—laughed bitterly in Gunnar's face, and went down to the hall.

Gunnar flung the useless bow aside and caught his bill in both hands. A stout defence he made; for the first eight that swarmed up the walls fell wounded nigh to death; but his foes were too many, and in time they hemmed him in against a corner of the loft and slew him there. For all that, when the suitors came to reckon up their loss, they found sixteen sorely wounded and two dead. Then came Gizur the White and some of the band to Gunnar's mother Rannveig, saying, 'We pray thee grant us earth enough wherein to lay our two dead men.' Rannveig answered, 'You are welcome enough; and I am only sorry that I have not to grant it to all of you.' And Gizur said to his fellows, 'Come away, and take no heed of her words, for she has had a great loss.' And he charged them all that they should not spoil or rob anything about the place. So they buried their dead and went quietly away.

Rannveig after this grēw so bitter against Hallgerda that there was no abiding in the house; wherefore Hallgerda took her son Grani and fled away to Gritwater where Thrain her son-in-law dwelt, who had wedded her daughter by her first husband. So Gunnar's son Hogni took to the farm at Lithend. They raised a great cairn over Gunnar and set him upright upon a chair, with all his weapons by him save the bill, which Rannveig said was to be kept for the man that should avenge him. But for many nights such strange noises were heard from Gunnar's cairn, that at length Hogni fetched Njal's son Skarp-hedinn, and they two went at midnight to see

what it might betoken. It was a clear cold night, and fleecy clouds drifted over the bright moon and stars. And as they beheld, lo, it seemed as if the cairn stood open, and Gunnar had turned himself within the cairn: the moonlight fell upon his face, and he was merry, singing a battle-song which might be heard a long way off; four lights burned round about him, but cast no shadows. As they gazed and listened, the moon was hidden by a cloud; and when it shone again the song was done and the cairn was shut.

Then Hogni took Skarp-hedinn home with him, and being come into the house Hogni laid his hand upon Gunnar's bill which hung up in its place. As soon as he touched it there was a singing in the bill, and Rannveig sprang up, saying, 'Thou art he that shall bear it to avenge thy father, and already has the bill spoken of one man's death or more.' Hogni took the weapon and went out, Skarp-hedinn going with him. That night they came upon Thorgeir and three other of the suitors. Two died by the bill and two by Skarp-hedinn's axe. Mord they found likewise, but he went upon his knees and begging for mercy offered all he had for life. So Skarp-hedinn took an atonement from him at a great price in money for his share in Gunnar's death and let him go.

II. THE BURNING OF NJAL.

Now Njal's two younger sons Grim and Helgi joined themselves with some other men and went sea-roving about the Orkneys where they met with many adventures. Once when they were beset by thirteen ships a viking with ten ships, who chanced to steer that way, saw how hard they were put to it, and striking in on the weaker side fought a great battle and drave off their enemies.

This viking wore a helm of gold upon his head, scarce brighter than the golden hair which fell upon his shoulders; his face was frank and handsome, and he fought with a great two-handed sword named Life-luller. He told them he was called Kari, and that he was the son of Solmund. And from that time a great friendship sprang up between him and Njal's sons; and many times thenceforward Kari succoured them and fought at their side both on sea and land.

After a while the brothers left Kari, and sailing east came to Norway. There they fell in with Thrain who had wedded Hallgerda's daughter. Thrain had been some winters in Norway serving Yarl Hacon, and with his war-ship, the Vulture, had gained no little wealth and renown. Grim and Helgi having known Thrain in Iceland, renewed their fellowship with him, and were often aboard his ship when he went out a-raiding. It happened one day as the Vulture lay out in the offing ready for a cruise, that Thrain and Njal's sons were just putting off from shore in a little boat to take the water-casks aboard, when a man came racing to the water-side, and sprang down upon the shingle, crying, 'Help me, good men and true! Yarl Hacon and his men are at my heels, and they will kill me like a dog.' Helgi looked at the fellow and said, 'Take him not in, Thrain, for if I misjudge not he is an unlucky man to have to do with. Besides, it were an unseemly deed towards thy friend Yarl Hacon.' Thrain heeded not, but turning to the man asked, 'Who art thou? What hast thou done?' He answered, 'My name is Hrapp. I have the blood of many men upon my hands; I have beguiled the daughter of my friend; I have burned the shrines of the gods, and plundered them of their jewels.' 'Hast thou the jewels with thee?' said Thrain. 'Aye,' said Hrapp. 'Give them to me, and for that price I will take thee aboard.' 'Not all,' the man pleaded; 'good master, let me keep a portion

for myself.' Thrain dashed his oar into the water, saying, 'All or none; do as you will. But listen!' Hrapp listened, and heard the tramp of horses' feet and the hue and cry of his pursuers. He said, 'I have no choice; take all,' and leaping into the boat, lay down beneath the benches at the bottom. The boat shoved off. Yarl Hacon and his men came down upon the beach and hailed her, but she made no sign. The boat rowed to the ship and the men went on board.

Not a ripple was on the water; not a breath of wind in the sky. 'A plague on it!' cried Thrain, 'we must lie here at anchor till a breeze gets up, for we are too short-handed to man the oars. And where is this man to hide? For of a surety Hacon will search the vessel.' Then he took an empty water-cask, and putting Hrapp therein lowered the cask overboard so that it should lie under the shadow of the stern.

Very soon Yarl Hacon put off in a barge and came to the ship. He said to Thrain, 'We seek a man named Hrapp who has done us all manner of evil. Deliver him up to us.' Thrain answered, 'He is not here; I know naught of him. Many a winter have I served thee well, and I deem it in nowise a fit return that thou shouldst charge me thus. Howbeit, seek him if thou art so minded.' The Yarl sought but could not find him. Then he bespake Njal's sons, saying, 'I know that ye are men of truth; tell me where this man is hidden.' But though they held not with Thrain they counted it shame to betray him; so they answered, 'Go ask of Thrain, or seek him for thyself; we will have naught to do with the matter.' And with that they took the ship's boat and rowed off to their own vessel. The Yarl likewise went away, doubting and ill-satisfied. But no sooner had he got back to land and espied the water-cask than he put off again. Thrain watched him coming, and taking Hrapp up out of the cask, stowed him away in a sack amongst the ship's lading.

Wherefore Hacon came and turned the cask bottom up, and routed the ship over a second time, but could not find the man he sought. Yet when he got ashore again it seemed to come into his mind that Hrapp must be among the sacks, and a third time he came aboard. He said, 'I know the man is here, and when I am ashore I seem to see it plainly, but aboard the vessel thou dost balk me. Give him up, or it will be worse for thee.' 'Well,' said Thrain, 'if thou art bent on making me out a liar, seek for thyself, I shall not help thee.' This time they had folded Hrapp in the sail which was brailed up to the yard. The Yarl searched the vessel through, and came away dissatisfied; but scarce had he got ashore when a breeze sprang up, the Vulture spread her sails, and immediately Hacon saw Hrapp in the rigging.

Straightway Hacon made ready four war-ships, and put out to sea after Thrain, but the Vulture had a good start and got clean off. Being very vexed thereat, Hacon cruised about till he fell in with the ship wherein Njal's sons were, and feeling assured that they were privy to Hrapp's hiding, he gave them battle, and after a long fight took Grim and Helgi prisoners, and having bound them flung them in the hold to wait for death. But in the night Grim espied an axe lying edge up in the hold, and rolling himself over thereto he cut his cords, and then went and loosed his brother. At daybreak they saw an island scarce a mile away, and getting softly over the ship's side they dropped into the sea and swam to land. A ship had put in thither for water, and to their joy they found it was the ship of their friend Kari, Solmund's son. Yarl Hacon steered in shore and asked Kari if he was harbouring Njal's sons. 'I am,' said Kari. 'Wilt thou give them up to me?' 'That will I not,' said he; 'they are my friends even as I am thine, and thou hast misjudged them. But I am ready to make the peace betwixt you; and when thou shalt learn of a truth that these men had no hand

in deceiving thee it shall be left to thee to award them recompense for the despite done to them.' So when Yarl Hacon knew the truth he made full atonement, and they all became friends.

After that Njal's sons roved the sea with Kari, and went harrying about Anglesea and the southern isles. And when they had gotten much booty, Grim and Helgi constrained Kari to come out to Iceland and abide at their house. And so he did; and in the springtime Kari wedded Helga, one of Njal's daughters, and there was the greatest of good fellowship betwixt him and all Njal's house, both then and ever afterwards.

Now Thrain had likewise come home, and abode at Gritwater with Hallgerda his mother-in-law; Hrapp also dwelt with him. And there was very little love between that household and Njal's. For Thrain was sore against Helgi and Grim because they had not lied for him over Hrapp's hiding, but had made friends with Hacon at his expense. Hrapp hated both brothers because they withstood his being taken into Thrain's ship. Hallgerda bare yet in her mind the memory of her old feud with Bergthora, Njal's wife; but Njal and all his sons she hated for another cause. In wedding Gunnar she had looked that, with the bravest and most dauntless man in Iceland for a husband, every fancied slight to her should have been avenged with blood. Instead of that, in all things Gunnar had been peacefully ruled by Njal; for Njal he became a man whom she despised; for Njal's light-given meat he had disdained the food which she had got by theft. Njal made her husband a man of whom she would fain be rid; but being rid of him she hated the man that made her content to see him die. The ill-will of Thrain and Hrapp might soon have cooled, but Hallgerda fanned it day by day. So time went on, and Thrain would talk of Njal as 'that old beardless fool,' and when he met Njal's sons he spake not to them. There was only one in all

Thrain's household untainted with bad feeling towards Njal; and that was Hauskuld, Thrain's son, a generous-minded youth who bare no living soul ill-will.

Grim and Helgi were annoyed beyond measure at Thrain's coldness, the more so after what they had suffered for his sake; and Skarp-hedinn their elder brother hearing continually of Thrain's ill words grew restless, and fell to whetting his great two-handed axe War-Ogress. Skarp-hedinn was a tall gaunt man, with a rugged face as pale as ashes; his hair was short and crisp; his front teeth stood out from his mouth; he was impatient and quick of speech, but very valiant. Skarp-hedinn would straightway have gone with his brothers and fallen on Thrain, but Njal counselled them all to forbear. He said, 'Ye have none of you with your own ears heard Thrain speak evil concerning us; it may be idle tale-bearing; wait and see.' 'Not so,' said Skarp-hedinn, 'but we will go to Thrain's house and set all doubt at rest.' Thereupon Njal's sons and Kari their brother-in-law rode over to Gritwater; and being come to the homestead they saw Hallgerda standing in the porch; but she gave them no word of greeting. Skarp-hedinn said, 'Perchance we are not welcome here?' Hallgerda answered, 'None within this house will say that ye are welcome.'

'Well,' said Skarp-hedinn, 'our errand is not with thee.' So they entered the house and came to Thrain. Then spake Helgi, 'I am come to know if thou wilt make amends for what befell me and my brother Grim in Norway because of thee?' Thrain answered, 'Canst thou measure thy manhood by naught but money?' Helgi said, 'A word from us to Yarl Hacon would have cost thy life; yet we spake not that word; and for that cause we suffered hardships.' Then Hrapp said, 'Luck ruled it that ye had the stripes while we got free; tempt your luck no further lest the like befall you all again.' Skarp-

hedinn said to his brother, 'Bandy no words with a man who has robbed the shrines of the gods.' 'Hold thy tongue, Skarp-hedinn,' cried Hrapp, 'or I will drive my axe into thy skull.' Skarp-hedinn scoffed at him, saying, 'We shall see before long which shall scatter gravel over the other's head.' Then Hallgerda cried aloud, 'Away with you, sons of a beardless fool, who grew your beards as we grow hay upon the meadows, by dunging them. Ye Dungbeards get you gone!' In like manner also did Hrapp revile them, but Thrain held his peace.

Njal's sons came home and told their father. And their mother Bergthora hearing it, said, 'Ye have borne these words? And yet I see no blood upon your axes? Verily folk will say that my sons have not the heart to lift their weapons.'

But not many days after, Njal's sons and Kari set out in quest of their revilers. It was winter time, and as they wended along by the side of the river Fleet, they saw Thrain and Hrapp with six men on the other bank. The ice being broken away from the side of the river where the brothers were, they could not get across, till, perceiving a tongue of ice further down which stretched to the shore, they hasted thither, all save Skarp-hedinn, who lagged behind to tie his shoe. Thrain and his fellows from the other side espying them came out upon the ice, Thrain foremost. Then Skarp-hedinn had no patience to go after his brothers, but took a run and a spring from the bank, and leaping twelve ells across the water on to the sheet of ice, came sliding down on Thrain swift as a bird flies. Down came the axe cleaving Thrain's skull to the jaw-teeth; and before the others could get a blow at him, Skarp-hedinn had slid to where his brothers were. Afterwards a fierce fight befell, wherein Grim slew Hrapp, and Kari smote down a strong man named Tjorvi; the rest prayed for peace, and Skarp-hedinn gave it to them. Howbeit Helgi was against the peacemaking, for

he said, 'These men will never be true to us.' One of the men was Grani, Gunnar's froward son, and it was for his sake that the peace was made.

After Njal had paid down the blood-money which was awarded for these slayings, he took out a ring of gold, and calling Hauskuld, Thrain's son, to him, he set it on his hand, saying, 'Wilt thou take this as a gift from me?' The lad said, 'That I will; for though I know full well that Skarp-hedinn slew my father, he was greatly provoked to anger. Thou and thy sons are just men; the atonement has been fully paid, and I cannot bear malice against any of you.' Njal said, 'Thou hast answered well, and thou wilt live to be a good man and true.' Then he made Hauskuld the offer to take him for his foster-son, and the youth was glad thereat and went home with him to Bergthors-knoll. There he abode, and grew up with Njal and his sons, much beloved of them all, for he was exceeding comely and withal blithe and gentle and fair-spoken.

Now Hauskuld set his mind upon a maiden named Hildegunna, one of the fairest of women, but very proud and hard-hearted. She dwelt with her uncle Flosi. And being desired of Hauskuld to ask this maiden for him to wife, Njal came to Flosi and offered to lay down such money as he should deem fitting to make the match on behalf of his foster-son. Then Hildegunna being called in, said, 'Who is this man that he should think to wed with me? I will only wed with one who has the priesthood and who is a leader among men.' Wherefore Njal besought Flosi to let his niece tarry three winters for Hauskuld, the while they tried to get him a priesthood. And Flosi made that bargain.

All that winter Njal tried to get a priesthood and a leadership for his foster-son, but no man was found willing to sell his priesthood. Howbeit, when the Althing came on, it chanced that there a was great deal of talk about the

four Quarter Courts being too few to settle the multitude of suits which were brought. So it fell out that a fifth court was named, and new priesthoods being set up Njal got the one at White-ness for Hauskuld, who was thenceforward called the Priest of White-ness. After that, Hildegunna was reconciled to a marriage with Hauskuld; so they were wed and set up housekeeping at Ossaby. And there was the greatest of friendship between Hauskuld and Njal and all his sons. They bade each other to the harvest-feasts, and gave gifts to one another, and Njal's sons were always in Hauskuld's company.

Then came the change of faith, for King Olaf, being come to the throne of Norway, sent out men to christen the western isles. They preached the faith with spear and sword. Many repented at the spear-point; some died in their sins, and some were saved; but most believed. In Iceland, where the people held so much by Njal, men came and asked his counsel, saying that it was a strange and a wicked thing to shake off the old faith in the gods. But Njal went away by himself and mused, and when he had long pondered he said, 'The flower is better than the seed, the fruit than the flower. Happy is he who knoweth that the flower is from the seed and who looketh for the fruit. You cannot hinder the new faith; but if you are wise you will help it, as I shall. What will be, will be.'

Now the court whereof Hauskuld was priest took in part of the district which had beforetime been in Mord's priesthood; and Mord was sore vexed at finding men continually declare themselves out of his Thing, and go over to Hauskuld's Thing; for which cause he began to bear ill-will against Hauskuld the Priest of White-ness. About the same time, Mord's father fell sick from old age, and being brought to his death-bed he said to his son, 'The money I leave thee is nothing to what it ought to be. We have scraped and saved in vain: for Skarp-

hedinn impoverished us when he made us pay that heavy price for thy share in Gunnar's death. How he robbed us! O my son, remember this against him evermore. Let him smart for it, and I shall die in peace. Make friends with Njal and his sons, and so learn how best to wreak thy vengeance on them all. Promise me. They have got our gold.' Mord said, 'I promise. Leave that to me. But now, father, since thou art nigh to death, I would that thou shouldest repent, and shake off the old faith and take the new.' Then he brought to his father crosses and many other holy tokens and set them before his eyes. Valgard lifted himself fiercely in his bed, caught up the crosses in his hands and brake them to pieces, saying, 'I abide by the old faith, and I die and curse the thief which stole my gold.' So he breathed his last breath.

Then Mord began to devise how to be avenged at once on Hauskuld the Priest for coming into his district, and on Njal's sons; and the better to set them by the ears he made friends with both. He bade Njal's sons and Kari to a feast, and when the feast was over he gave gifts to each, but the gift of greatest price he gave to Skarp-hedinn—a brooch of gold. Njal saw the gifts and said to his sons, 'Take heed; for they will be bought full dear. But most of all, beware how ye repay the giver in the coin he wishes to get.'

Then came Mord to Hauskuld, saying, 'Much it grieveth me to lay aught to the charge of any man, but I warn thee against Njal's sons, and most of all against Skarp-hedinn, for thou trustest him, the while his heart is not right concerning thee. He envies thee the priesthood. Knowest thou that he took it up for his own when thou camest not to the last Thing? He will never let it go.' 'Nay, Mord, thou art wrong,' said Hauskuld, 'for he gave it back to me at harvest-time.' 'Then Njal must have made him do it,' said Mord; 'for this I know, that Skarp-hedinn meaneth thee mischief. Hast thou for-

gotten his treachery when ye twain went together towards Marfleet; how an axe fell out from under Skarp-hedinn's belt?' Hauskuld answered, 'What of it? Was it not his woodman's axe? Spare thy words; for I have no mind to hear slanders against Njal's sons. They are my friends, and I would rather die at their hands than doubt them. But thou art all the worse man in my esteem for speaking thus concerning them.'

Then Mord went his way to Njal's sons, and said, 'What a double-faced man is Hauskuld! Who would believe it of one so fair-spoken! Yet he is always talking ill of you behind your backs. He says that Skarp-hedinn dealt treacherously by him, because forsooth a wood-axe fell from his belt on the way to Marfleet. Little do you know the man. Last time you feasted with Hauskuld do you remember where you slept?' 'Aye,' said Skarp-hedinn; 'the beds were made in three outhouses, because Hauskuld had pulled down his hall that he might build it anew.' 'True,' said Mord, 'but round about the outhouse wherein ye slept Hauskuld piled up faggots, and would have burned you in all your beds; but Hogni, Gunnar's son, came in the night and Hauskuld was afraid of him. And after ye were gone your ways Hauskuld sent out a band of men to fall upon you, only their courage failed them.' At first Njal's sons believed not his words—the tale perchance had too much circumstance—but day by day as Mord grew vaguer in his slanders, throwing out dark hints of treachery and ill-faith, the brothers doubted, and a coldness sprang up betwixt them and Hauskuld. Then Mord fed their misgivings so guilefully that in Hauskuld's sadness at their altered behaviour they only read his guilt.

Flosi came and abode awhile with Hauskuld, and hearing from his niece Hildegunna how things went with him and Njal's sons, he said, 'Get thee up and leave this part, and I will give thee a homestead away in

Skaptarfell.' But Hauskuld said, 'Nay, wherefore should I flee? I have naught but kindness in my heart towards Njal's sons. Something unknown to me hath estranged us. They will presently learn the truth, and love me the better for never losing faith in them.' Then seeing that he could not turn Hauskuld from his resolve, Flosi gave him a richly broidered cloak of scarlet and rode away. Hauskuld was greatly beloved of men, and he had no foes that he knew of save Njal's sons, whereat he grieved heavily.

One spring day at the seedtime of the corn, Bergthora heard Kari and her sons talking eagerly outside the house porch, and she said to her husband, 'What are they planning now?' Njal answered, 'I cannot tell; I am not in their counsels; but when their plans are good they seldom withhold them from me.'

That night Njal's sons went not to their beds. They took their weapons and coming out softly from the house met Mord at a trysting-place which they had appointed. Mord stirred them up to fall upon Hauskuld at once lest he should be beforehand with them; and they agreed amongst themselves that all should give him a wound and thereby set their hands to the slaying.

Now Hauskuld had risen up in the early morning. The sun was shining blithely, and he put on the scarlet cloak Flosi's gift, and taking his corn sieve went into the fields to sow the corn. Njal's sons together with Mord and Kari lay in wait for him behind a fence, and when Hauskuld drew nigh the hedgerow, singing as he scattered his corn, Skarp-hedinn leapt out on him. Hauskuld saw him and sought to turn away. But Skarp-hedinn ran up to him, saying, 'Wouldst thou seek to slink away, thou sneaking Priest of White-ness?' and straightway hewed at him. The blow smote Hauskuld on the head; he fell upon his knees and spake these words: 'God forgive thee, Skarp-hedinn my friend, as I do!' And before he could say

more the rest ran in, and all gave him wounds so that he died. Then Skarp-hedinn said, 'His blood is on all our hands.' Mord answered, 'That is true enough; nevertheless, I will fare home straightway and make as though I first heard the tidings from other folk, since by so doing I shall the better spy out how this slaying may be atoned.' 'Do as thou wilt,' said Skarp-hedinn, 'but forget not that we all had a share in this man's blood.'

Then the brothers went home to their father and told what they had done. And straightway there fell a great heaviness upon Njal insomuch that he bowed himself and wept and groaned aloud. He said, 'Better have lost two of my sons so Hauskuld were yet alive.' Skarp-hedinn answered, 'Thou art an old man; who shall blame thee for thy bitterness? For I know that thou lovedst Hauskuld passing well.' 'Nay,' said Njal, 'it is not that. In sooth I am old, and I loved Hauskuld well; but most of all I grieve foreseeing what shall come of it. All my life long I have gone in dread of a day like this. And now I know that a horrible death is surely at hand for me and my wife and all my sons.' Then said Kari, 'Hast thou naught to foretell for me?' Njal answered, 'Thy good luck is so great that it will be hard for any ill-fortune to overcome it.'

It was late that morning when Hildegunna awoke. She had dreamed ill dreams, and when she missed her lord from her side she sprang out of bed and called aloud to her servants, saying, 'Go search for Hauskuld; for evil is nigh him, or perchance has already overtaken him.' In haste she dressed herself and came down into the hall. And when she was come down, lo, there was something lying on the threshold wrapped in a broidered scarlet cloak. Hildegunna wept not; she was very calm. Mord's shepherd was by the porch, and seeing her, he came in and said, 'Mord bade me say that Njal's sons did this deed; in sooth many folk already have heard them boast of it.'

'A manly deed,' said Hildegunna, 'if one hand had done it.' She knelt and unwrapped her husband's body from the cloak. Her face grew dark and frowning; she never kissed the dead man's cheek; no tear of hers fell on his wounds. She took the scarlet cloak and wrapped it together, with the clots of blood yet in it; then laid it up in her chest.

The dead man's mother looked about for one to take up the suit for the slaying of her son. She fixed on Mord; would hear of none but Mord. Hildegunna demurred not; and Mord, feigning reluctance, at last consented. Then Mord brought neighbours with him and showed the body of Hauskuld wherein were five wounds. He named Skarp-hedinn, Grim, Helgi, and Kari as the dealers of four of the wounds, but of the fifth wound said he nothing, save that Skarp-hedinn had given the death-blow.

Men spoke ill of this slaying on all hands, calling it a foul deed and wrought without excuse, because Hauskuld had been gentle in his bearing and had made himself beloved of all folk. So it came to pass when Njal's sons went to and fro about the land seeking men to help them in the suit, that even their friends looked coldly on them or promised at most to hold aloof. Nevertheless because of Njal and the great esteem wherein he was held there were yet found staunch folk to stand by him.

It was said that Hildegunna recked little of the slaying of her husband. She laid him in the earth and none heard her bewail, and after that she busied herself about house-tending and spake but little. But it chanced one day that her uncle Flosi journeyed to the homestead, and Hildegunna set him in her husband's seat and cumbered herself greatly to serve him. And it came to pass when Flosi had eaten his full, that Hildegunna arose, and going into the midst of the hall, loosed her hair about her face and brake out a-weeping. Flosi lounged upon the bench and said, 'Thou weepest for a good husband; but I shall

follow up the suit, and I dare say we shall get an ample atonement in money for such a man.' Hildegunna turned on him fiercely, saying, 'Money? Suits? Talk not of such things. I will have blood.' Then she ran to her chest, and taking out the cloak, blood and all, as she had stripped it off Hauskuld's body, she came softly to Flosi while he dozed after meat, and flung it over his head, so that the clots of gore rattled down all about him. 'This was thy gift,' she cried, 'to Hauskuld; and now I give it back, charging thee before God to take vengeance for every wound which his dead body bare, or else to be adjudged a dastard evermore.' Flosi flung the cloak away. 'Thou grim hell-hag,' he cried; 'cruel are the counsels of women.' And Flosi came over by turns blood-red and ashen pale.

On a set day at the Thing men gathered to the Hill of Law from all parts in great multitudes to hear the suit of Mord and Flosi against Njal's sons for the slaying of the priest of White-ness. Folks said, 'Who is that tall, spare man, pale, sharp-visaged, with a face as rough as a sea-crag, who shows his front teeth and carries a great axe across his shoulder?' Others answered, 'That is Skarphedinn; he goes about among the booths seeking for some to stand by him in the suit.'

Men tried hard for Njal's sake to bring about an atonement, but Flosi was steadfast and would abide by nothing but the law.

Now the court being opened, Mord and Flosi set forth the indictment and called on Njal's sons to challenge the inquest. Then arose Thorhall the Lawman on their behalf, who said, 'This suit must needs fall to the ground inasmuch as it is brought by a man whose hands are not clean. At the showing of the death-wounds Mord only named the smiters of four of them. But on Hauskuld's body were five wounds; and I hereby impeach Mord as the giver of the fifth, whereby he made himself an outlaw, and as

such is debarred from bringing this suit.' Then Njal stood up and said, 'It seems to me that according to law this suit must come to naught; but yet I would not have it ended by a quibble which will only increase the rancour between us. Truly Hauskuld was dearer to me than my own sons; and when I knew that he was slain the sweetest light of my eyes was quenched. I have grieved for him more bitterly than you all. And now I pray his kindred by our common grief that they will suffer me to make atonement. I pray Flosi that he will choose out men to utter an award. And let it be a liberal one, for I deem no price too great for one so dear as Hauskuld was to me; nor will I murmur though it cost me all whereof I am possessed and leave me destitute in my age.' Then many of the chief men interceded with Flosi, promising him their friendship if he would take an atonement. And after they had urged him long, Flosi consented that six men named on either side should utter an award; and all the folk at the Thing were glad thereat.

So twelve of the best men were left alone in the court to consider an award, and when they had determined what it should be, a bell was rung and all the people flocked to the Hill of Laws to hear Snorri the priest deliver the award on behalf of the twelve. He said, 'We have sought in this matter to fix the terms of a lasting peace, for which cause we have not awarded outlawry either from the district or from the land, seeing that banishments are for the most part ill-fulfilled and oftentimes kindle strife afresh. We award instead a money price greater than has heretofore been paid for any man. Hauskuld shall be atoned with triple man-fines, which will be six hundreds in silver; and the money must be all paid up here at the Thing. But of this price, lest bitterness should arise because of its greatness, we the awarders will pay one half, and we pray that each man of you will give something, for God's sake, and so for ever end the feud.'

Njal thanked the judges for this award, but Skarp-hedinn laughed scornfully and held his peace. Then the awarders laid down their three hundreds in silver; Njal and his sons and Kari mustered two hundreds between them, which was all they had; and the people gave so liberally that at last all the money was laid down in a heap. And Njal took off a rich silken scarf which he wore and laid that on the top of the heap.

Presently Flosi came up to count the money, and seeing the scarf took it up and waved it about his head, crying aloud, 'Who gave this thing?' And when none spake he waved it again, and laughed, saying, 'Can no one tell who gave this rag?' Then Skarp-hedinn said, 'Who dost thou think has given it?' Flosi answered, 'Sooth to say I know of none that would own such women's gear save thy father the Beardless Carle, for it is hard to tell whether he be man or woman.' At that Skarp-hedinn's pale face flushed red, and he cried, 'Thou mayest soon learn that my father is a man, in that he has sons who can guard him from affront. But the reviler of an old man is neither man nor woman; wherefore I counsel thee to wear these, and hide thy shame'—therewith Skarp-hedinn flung a pair of breeches to him. Then Flosi waxed very wroth, and kicked the heap of money over, vowing he would not touch a penny of it, neither would he any longer make peace, but said he would have vengeance for Hauskuld instead. So the money was handed over to Gizur the White to take charge of, and the Thing broke up in confusion. Njal was very heavy at heart because the peace-making had thus been spoiled, and he said to Skarp-hedinn, 'It has all come to pass as I feared; for I foresaw from the first that evil would follow this suit.' Skarp-hedinn answered, 'There is naught to fear, for we are not outlawed, and they cannot pursue us by law.' Njal said, 'The worst that can happen to us is nigh at hand.'

Now Flosi rode away from the Thing and gathered men

together, one hundred and twenty in all. He took an oath from every man to stand by him in the quarrel till the destruction of Njal and his sons should be accomplished; and when they had all pledged themselves with shaken hands they took counsel how best to bring it about.

One evening at the homestead of Bergthors-knoll Bergthora had an ill-foreboding, and she spake to her household, 'Choose now each of you what meat he likes best, for this is the last meal I shall ever set before you.' They smiled and said, 'This shall not be so.'

Now Grim and Helgi had gone that day to Holar, there to abide for a week, and Bergthora answered her household, saying, 'It shall be even as I have told you; and I give you this for a token, that Grim and Helgi will come home before the meal is done. If this come true, the rest will surely happen.' And when she had set the meat out on the board Njal suddenly said, 'Things have a wondrous seeming in my eyes to-night. I seem to see out into the home-field as though the gable wall of the house were down. And the board, with all the meat upon it, seems one gore of blood.' Skarp-hedinn frowned, and spake about old age, and the enfeebling of the mind. But before the tables were cleared Grim and Helgi came home; and the house-folk whispered together and took it for a sign. Njal asked his sons why they came so soon. They said they could not tell—they had seen men riding hither and thither, and the whole country side seemed faring abroad—they knew not what it meant, and thought it better to be where Skarp-hedinn was.

That night from a vague foreboding none went to bed. Njal and his sons, with Kari and nearly thirty serving-men, stood out upon the threshold of the door and watched, till in the glooming twilight they saw men steal forth here and there and gather together into a mighty band. Njal saw them halt to hold counsel, and he said to Skarp-hedinn, 'They are far too many for us to deal with; wherefore it

is my will that we all go indoors, for the house is strong. Remember how hard it was found to master Gunnar of Lithend though he was alone in his house. There are quite enough of us to keep them at bay if we remain within walls.' 'Nay,' said Skarp-hedinn, 'Gunnar, it is true, held out bravely, but that was because those chiefs who attacked him were too noble-minded to burn him in the house. But these men will stick at nothing. Nor do I blame them, for they know full well it will be their deaths if we escape. But as for me I have no mind to be stifled to death indoors.' Then Njal spake querulously, 'My sons are ever setting at naught my counsel, now that I am old. They did not always so.' So Helgi said, 'Let us do as our father wills.' 'Well,' said Skarp-hedinn, 'I for one am not afraid of death, and if ye are all agreed to humour our father by being burnt in doors along with him, I will not say nay.'

So they made fast the doors; and immediately afterwards Flosi and his men came thronging about the house. Then Skarp-hedinn and his brothers hurled out spears and wounded many men. One of Flosi's band, named Hroald, spied Skarp-hedinn at a window, and climbing up thrust a spear in at him, but Skarp-hedinn hewed off the spear-head, and the second blow of the axe smashed through Hroald's shield and into his face and beat him backwards, dead.

Flosi's men suffered greatly from the darts hurled out upon them, and seeing that they could do nothing in return, because the house was so stoutly built, Flosi said to his fellows, 'It is clear that we cannot get at them with weapons, and there remain but two choices for us. One is to turn away; and that is not to be thought of since Njal's sons will certainly be avenged on us all for what we have done already. The other is to burn them in the house; and though that is a dreadful deed which we shall all have to answer for before God, it must be done.'

Then they brought wood and piled it round about the house, and set fire thereto, while Skarp-hedinn mocked them from the windows, saying, 'What, you scullions! are you going to take to cooking?' 'Aye,' answered one of them, 'and we shall give you little cause to complain of being under-done.' Skarp-hedinn looked at the man who said this and saw it was Grani, Gunnar's son. 'Grani,' he said, 'I avenged thy father; and this is my reward. God help thee; thou art a thankless fellow.'

Now the wood was green, and as fast as it was kindled the women within the house put it out by pouring down water and slops thereon. But hard by was a vetch stack, and Flosi's men fetched the dry fodder and filled the loft that was over the crosstrees of the hall therewith and set fire to it. And the inmates knew not of this till the hall was blazing overhead. At the same time piles of the vetches were kindled before all the doors until the wood took fire and began to burn fiercely. Then the women-folk within doors fell to bewailing themselves and weeping pitifully. But Njal comforted them, saying, 'Be of good cheer, for this is the last pain you shall ever have to endure.'

In a little while the whole house being kindled, Njal looked out of a window and calling to Flosi to come near, said, 'Wilt thou take atonement for my sons, or allow them to go out?' Flosi answered, 'I will take no atonement for them, but here I will remain until they are all dead. Nevertheless the women and the house-carles may come out.'

Then Njal called together the women and the serving-men and all who had leave to go. Thorhalla, Helgi's wife, wept bitterly at parting from her husband; and first would go, and then would die with him, then wept anew. But some of the other women persuaded Helgi to let them disguise him in a woman's cloak and kerchief; and being intreated very sore of his wife he yielded. So they came

out, Helgi going in the midst of the women. But Flosi watched the door and cried to his men, 'A tall woman passed me, very broad across the shoulders; she is yonder; hold her.' Then Helgi flung away his cloak, and drew his sword. The first man that laid hands on him he cut down, but others ran in upon him, and Flosi came up and hewed off his head.

Then Flosi came back to the house and called for Njal and Bergthora. And when they were come to the window he said, 'Njal, thou art an old man, and I would not burn thee indoors. Thou shalt pass out free.'

Njal answered, 'I am too old to avenge my sons upon thee, but I could not live in shame. I will stay with them.' Then Flosi said to Bergthora, 'Do thou come out; for I would not have it on my soul that I burned a woman alive.' And he intreated her. But Bergthora said to him, 'I was very young when I was given to Njal, and then I promised him that nothing should ever part us twain. We have lived long together and nothing has parted us, nor ever shall.'

So they went back together, hand in hand, into the house. And Bergthora laid her head against Njal's shoulder and said, 'Husband, what shall we do?' He kissed her tenderly and answered, 'It is bed-time, dear one. It is time to rest.' So he led her to their chamber. A little boy, Kari's youngest son, was lying in their bed, and Bergthora went to lift him up to take him to another room; for she said to Njal, 'We cannot see the boy die before our eyes.' But the child said, 'Grandmother, I have always slept with you, and I would rather die with you and Njal than live afterwards.'

Then they laid them down in the bed and took the boy between them; and having signed themselves and the child with the cross and committed their souls into God's hands, Njal called to his house-steward, who had not yet gone out, saying, 'Mark well how we lie, so that thou

mayest afterwards be able to tell where to look for our bones; for we shall not stir hence for any pain or smart of burning. And now take yonder ox-hide from the wall and cover us therewith.' The steward took the hide, which came off an ox but newly killed, and having spread it over them, went out. That was the last that was seen or heard of Njal and Bergthora alive. Skarp-hedinn, when he knew from the steward how his father had laid himself down, said to his brother Grim, 'Our father goes early to bed. What wonder? He is an old man.'

Then Skarp-hedinn and Kari and Grim began to tear down the blazing timbers and to hurl out firebrands upon Flosi and his men. These cast spears at them, but the brothers caught the spears in their hands and flung them back again, till Flosi said, 'Forbear! the fire will overcome them fast enough.'

The heat grew stifling and the fire-forks crossed within the hall. All overhead was a fierce roaring sheet of flame, and ever and anon the great roof-beams came crashing down on fire, encumbering the place with blazing ruins. Skarp-hedinn said, 'Father must have died easily, for we have heard neither groan nor sigh from him.' Kari and Skarp-hedinn were by a window on the leeward side to get the air; and Kari said, 'Let us leap out here; the smoke blowing hitherward may give us a chance to get away unseen.' Skarp-hedinn answered, 'Do thou leap out first, and perchance if thou gettest off safe I will follow thee. If not, thou wilt avenge me.' Kari said, 'In sooth I will;' and snatching up a blazing bench, hurled it down among those who stood outside. These ran away, and Kari leapt out and crept along in the track of the smoke. But his hair and clothes were on fire, and some of the men seeing something pass, cried, 'Was not that a man leapt out at the roof?' 'Nay,' answered another, 'but much more likely a firebrand that Skarp-hedinn hurled at us.' So Kari got off safely and came to

a stream wherein he threw himself to quench the fire that was on him.

Now Skarp-hedinn made a trial to get to the window to leap out, but the charred beams whereon he stood brake under him and threw him back on the fiery ruins. He got up, and leapt up to the window with a run, but the wall-plate came down with his weight and fell on him within the house. And after this the fire became so fierce upon the walls that there was no more getting nigh them. Then Skarp-hedinn and his brother Grim held one another by the hand and went about treading the fire; but when they came into the midst of the hall Grim fell down dead. Skarp-hedinn heard a shattering of the timbers overhead and ran to the end of the house. But the roof fell in with a mighty noise and jammed him fast against the gable so that he could neither move hand nor foot. For a moment the fallen roof choked the flames; the crackling sparks went up in clouds; then huge rolling billows of smoke belched up into the sky, and there broke out a-blaze. Loud roared the flames and all the place was wrapped in fire. But between whiles, as the flame-noise lulled, a man's voice was heard singing in the midst of the fire; and they which heard it marvelled greatly, for they thought Skarp-hedinn had been dead long before. They heard the voice for near an hour; then it ceased, and there was no sound but the crackling of the wood, the noise of falling timbers, and the uproar of the fire.

When the fire began to burn low there were some of Flosi's men who broke out rejoicing; but Flosi was sad and rebuked them, saying, 'Hold your peace. We must find something better to boast of than burning an old man in his house. And now I know of a truth that vengeance will be taken for this deed; wherefore it is my counsel that none of you go to your homes. Not a man of us must part from the other henceforth, but do you all

ride east with me.' So Flosi gathered together stores and provisions without stint, and all the Burners rode east with him to his homestead at Swinefell.

Now Kari came to Mord and told how he had escaped from the fire; and Mord having now seen his vengeance accomplished, and knowing that the people would be stirred up to anger against the Burners, gladly espoused his cause and promised him help. Then they got men together and came to Bergthors-knoll to search for Njal's bones. Kari showed them the spot, and when they had digged through a great heap of ashes they came upon the ox-hide charred and shrivelled. The hide was lifted, and lo, the bodies of Njal and Bergthora were bright and fair, and scarce the smell of fire had passed upon them. They lay as though they slept, and smiled in their sleep; and the child in like manner, save that one of his fingers was burnt where he had stretched it forth from beneath the ox-hide. Then the men sought for Skarp-hedinn in the place whence the sound of the singing had come. And they found his body betwixt the roof and the gable. He was jammed in upright, his legs burnt off to the knees; he had bitten through his under lip with the pain; his eyes were open, but proud and calm in their aspect. He had driven his axe up to the haft in the gable wall that the blade might not be softened. Over his breast he had laid his hands in a cross, and the fire had branded the crossed hands on his body. Men had no dread of Skarp-hedinn when they beheld him, but all said it was good to be near such a dead body. They found Grim's bones in the midst of the hall, and in other places the bones of four serving men; in all nine souls.

When they had buried the dead, Mord began to take up suits on behalf of Njal's kinsmen against Flosi and the rest of the Burners. And first he summoned nine thanes who were Njal's neighbours on an inquest of outlawry against Flosi for the killing of Helgi. But a cunning lawyer

named Eyjolf took up Flosi's cause. And when he had looked into the old statutes Eyjolf challenged four of the thanes on the ground that two of them by baptismal kinship with Mord were debarred from serving on the inquest; and other two, because instead of being separate householders they had only one hearth in common. Mord answered that, even if baptismal kinship were a hindrance like blood kindred, it went for nothing, he not being the real plaintiff but only the pleader of the suit; and that the householder statute was annulled by the later law which laid down that a man may sit on an inquest who is worth three hundreds in land and dairy stock. But the Speaker of the Law adjudged that kinship with the pleader was unlawful, inasmuch as the pleader was for the time being the real plaintiff; and he also laid down that the old statute as to separate householding was not set aside but only added to by the newer law concerning money qualification. So it fell to the five thanes only to give judgment, and they found Flosi guilty. But their finding came to naught, for Eyjolf showed that the suit ought to have been brought in the Northlanders' Court instead of the Eastfirthers', and he therefore uttered protest against the judges giving judgment. And other suits being brought on for the Burning, Eyjolf brought every trick and quibble of law to bear on Flosi's behalf, so that these also fell to the ground. Yet still new suits went dragging on from court to court on different issues, until it came to this—the great wrong of the Burning had long ceased to be the matter in dispute, and the only quibble that was wrangled over at the Althing was whether one of two lawyers, Mord or Eyjolf, was guilty of contempt of court.

But Kari and Njal's kinsmen got many powerful friends who held it shame that a great wrong unredressed should dwindle down to a mere squabble betwixt lawyers. And at last, wearied with daily waiting about the courts, they

drew their swords at the Althing and made a great onslaught on the Burners. Then the Court of Laws brake up in haste. Snorri the Priest and Skapti Speaker of the Law threw down their parchments and seized bill and axe; and men were fighting all about. The booths were overturned and great was the tumult. Kari with his great two-handed sword Life-luller hewed many of the Burners down, and Njal's kinsmen fought so fiercely that at last Flosi and his folk had to turn and flee across Axe-water. There Flosi drew up his men, and during a lull in the battle he began to think within himself of what he had brought on Njal and what he was bringing on the land. And he sent a messenger to Kari's people, saying, 'I have sinned against you all; but I will make atonement. Choose whom you will to utter an award and I will abide by it. Only let not the land be divided against itself for my fault.'

So the matter was left to twelve chief men, and Snorri the Priest delivered their award. Triple fines were to be paid for Njal, and double fines for Bergthora and Grim and Helgi. Skarp-hedinn's death was to be set over against that of Hauskuld, Priest of White-ness; and single fines were awarded for all others which had been burnt in the house. The slayings in the affray at the Thing were to be set one against another, and that which was over and above on either side was to be paid in money. The Burners were all to go away into banishment or be proclaimed outlaws, and Flosi was besides to make a pilgrimage to Rome.

Flosi heard the award and was content; and he would not so much as put a price upon the wounds which he had got in the affray.

So the settlement was made, and it was well kept afterwards. Flosi sailed away and came to Rome, where he abode a long while, doing penance and getting his soul in health. As for the Burners, some failed to go abroad,

and being thereby outlawed Kari and Njal's kinsmen hunted them down and slew them; moreover they tracked the Burners into other lands and hunted them there. Of the rest, some fell in battle in far countries, and many more were overtaken by ill-haps on sea and land; so that scarce a man of them came to die in his bed.

Years afterwards, when Flosi had fulfilled the time of his banishment and had paid all the fines and gotten absolution from the Pope's own hand, he came back to Iceland and dwelt at his farmstead in Swinefell. He was waxed graver and gentler than his wont and seldom spake much. Kari still went about hunting the Burners, giving them no rest. Yet when Flosi heard of the deaths of any of them he would go forth peaceably, and, seeking out their bodies, would bestow much money on their funerals, so that prayers and masses might be offered up; but none ever heard him utter a wrathful word against Kari. Nevertheless for all this Kari thought that he had not taken vengeance enough.

But it fell out once when Kari was out at sea that a storm drave his vessel against the rocks off Swinefell. Kari and his men saved nothing but their lives; and when they had swum ashore the storm raged wilder. Then they said one to another, 'What shall we now do for food and shelter, for we are on Flosi's land and have no weapons?' And Kari said, 'This will we do; we will go up to Swinefell and put Flosi's manhood to the proof.' So they went up, drenched as they were and with scarce a rag upon their backs, and stood at Flosi's door. And when Flosi beheld Kari he knew him immediately and brought him in and kissed him. With his own hands he took off Kari's rags and clothed him in the best raiment that he had, and sate him on the high seat by his side.

So Kari and Flosi were made friends, and the Burning was atoned. And in aftertime when Kari's wife Helga died, he wedded Flosi's niece Hildegunna, who was beforetime the wife of Hauskuld Priest of White-ness.

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